

# The Spur

by ARDYTH KENNELLY

*Author of* THE PEACEABLE KINGDOM



# The Spur

By ARDYTH KENNELLY

*Author of The Peaceable Kingdom*

HIS name was John Wilkes Booth. On that Good Friday in 1865, he crept into the Lincoln box in the Ford Theater in Washington, and, standing close behind the gaunt President, he pronounced the words "Sic semper tyrannis," and pulled the trigger of his tiny, gold-mounted derringer. With a light movement he vaulted over the railing to the stage. But his spur caught in the flag draped on the box, and he fell. The audience sat frozen as he hopped on one leg from the stage.

John Wilkes Booth was a star in the American theater, adored by many women, lionized by many men. What were the forces that drove him to commit one of the most notorious crimes in our history? What led him to assume a role more dramatic than anything he had ever played on the stage?

Here are the answers. Here is the story of the twisted emotions and the hidden passions that turned this handsome, talented young actor into a bitter, psychopathic killer.

Step by step the fascinating pattern emerges: young Booth idolized by his family — his strange, narcissistic love for his sister Asia, who had the same beauty he saw in himself — his violent and unsatisfactory love affairs — his fanatical hatred and jealousy for his famous brother Edwin — his heavy drinking and wild excesses — and finally, his disastrous dream of glory: "The man who kills Lincoln can be sure of immortality — real immortality!"

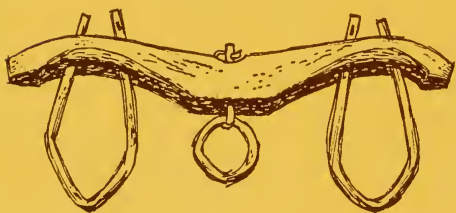
Ardyth Kennelly, author of *THE PEACEABLE KINGDOM*, has written an absorbing drama, combining history and fiction — the story of the man who killed Lincoln. The story itself is one of the most provocative and dramatic in our historical annals, and the character of the erratic, gifted young actor is a fascinating one to which Miss Kennelly has contributed a new and challenging interpretation.





LINCOLN ROOM

UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS  
LIBRARY



MEMORIAL

*the Class of 1901*


*founded by*

HARLAN HOYT HORNER

*and*

HENRIETTA CALHOUN HORNER





Digitized by the Internet Archive  
in 2012 with funding from  
University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign

<http://archive.org/details/spur00kenn>





---

# THE SPUR

By

*Ardyth Kennelly*



JULIAN MESSNER, INC., NEW YORK

---

PUBLISHED BY JULIAN MESSNER, INC.  
8 WEST 40TH STREET, NEW YORK

PUBLISHED SIMULTANEOUSLY IN CANADA  
BY THE COPP CLARK COMPANY, LTD.  
COPYRIGHT 1951, BY ARDYTH KENNELLY  
PRINTED IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA



973.7263

DK395

*for*  
*Egon*





## AUTHOR'S NOTE

At the end of this book is a list of the works I have consulted, every one of which served me greatly, but here I wish to acknowledge the most considerable of my debts—first, to Stanley Kimmel, whose book, *The Mad Booths of Maryland*, throws the biggest, brightest spot ever to pick out Lincoln's assassin upon the stage of life, and next, to *The Unlocked Book, a Memoir of John Wilkes Booth*, by the young tragedian's sister, Asia Booth Clarke. I also relied much on Osborn H. Oldroyd's *The Assassination of Lincoln*, Margaret Leech's ever-blooming *Reveille in Washington*, and *Myths After Lincoln*, by Lloyd Lewis.

I would like to express my appreciation to the State Library staff at Salem, Oregon, and especially to the staff of the Public Library, Portland, Oregon, who have been my good angels for years.





|| THE SPUR ||



---

# I

*"Something decisive and great must be done."*

—BOOTH'S DIARY

---

HIS HAIRLINE was beginning ever so slightly to recede, and if he had lived another twenty years, instead of just twelve days, he might have gone bald, or very near it, and that would have made him miserable. Anything would, that came and nibbled at his beauty, or dimmed it a little, like losing a tooth or waking up with a sty or having a vein cobweb across his cheek in a miniature confluence, a red raveling of fine threads. Tonight, the night of Good Friday, a few minutes past ten in the evening, April 14, 1865, nothing was wrong with his looks. He was twenty-six years old and as fresh as a daisy when for the last time he came out of Peter Taltavul's saloon into the wet spring night and walked up the brightly lit cobblestone street. It was only a few steps to the door of the theater, and when he pushed it open and went in there wasn't a spot or a stain, a mildew, a wrinkle, a shadow, to mar him. He had on elegant riding boots with slender steel spurs that gave him a courier's consecrated yet debonair look, a black broadcloth frock coat, tight trousers, fine linen shirt, checkered necktie, brocade vest and soft slouch hat.

He was an actor named John Wilkes Booth and he was about to murder Abraham Lincoln, the President of the United States of America. He had the gun to do it with, a derringer about six inches long, a lightweight, luxurious little weapon mounted in gold, and a dagger, too, engraved with the spidery words AMERICA, LIBERTY, INDEPENDANCE. The last word was misspelled, but the blade was sharp.

Any other man as full of brandy as he was, for he had been

drinking since early afternoon, would have been top-heavy, but Johnny Booth was a Maryland gentleman, so he walked as if he were sober, with a light, quick step, and did not stagger.

Under the lantern in front of Ford's was a wooden platform where carriages could stop and the ladies get down without wetting their slippers in case the street was muddy. Just here Johnny slackened his pace and turned and looked over his shoulder. He knew the carriage would still be standing at the curb near F Street, and yes, there it was.

He entered the theater through the second door from the right, the door President Lincoln had used an hour or so before when he arrived with his wife and two guests. The party was late and had missed the first act. The leader saw the President instantly, gave the high sign and the orchestra struck up "Hail to the Chief." Lincoln bowed from the box and smiled, and people clapped.

They would have clapped harder if Ulysses S. Grant had been with him. There were notices in the papers to the effect that he was going to be, and a great many people came just to see him. But the hero of the hour wasn't there. General Grant and his wife had turned down Lincoln's theater invitation at the last minute. They left Washington around suppertime by train to go to Burlington, New Jersey. Their excuse was that they were anxious to see their children in school there, though actually Mrs. Grant wasn't any too fond of Mrs. Lincoln, and would have hunted around for another excuse if it hadn't been that. The President was disappointed but Mrs. Lincoln invited somebody else instead, a young engaged couple, Miss Harris and her stepbrother, Major Rathbone, resplendent in uniform.

Nobody asked Johnny for a ticket. He had the run of the place because he was in the profession and often played there, so all he had to do was smile at the ticket taker, go across the lobby and open the door of the orchestra circle.

The second scene of the third act was on. The play, *Our American Cousin*, was none too good, but the actors were bending over backward for the sake of the President and his party, and for the large and fashionable audience that filled the body of the house to overflowing. Only one of the private boxes was filled—the other six

were empty. There were more blue uniforms than black civilian coats, and enough beards, mustaches, eyebrows, sideburns and flowing manes to stuff half the mattresses in the nation. The women had fanciful heads upon mother-of-pearl shoulders, and when they stirred within their iron corsets in an aurora borealis noise of rustling silk there were whiffs of their good and bad perfumes and flashes of their jewels like fireflies going on and off. The audience sat deep in twilight and the stage was full of warm yellow light that made the eyes of the actors sparkle like polished glass and showed up their bright paint. Two people were on the stage, playing the roles of Mrs. Mountchessington, a middle-aged female, and Asa Trenchard, the hero of the play. She was saying something haughty to him and he was looking drolly at her. A light laugh rippled through the audience.

Johnny stood by the door and looked upward to the right, past the big chandelier, at the two upper boxes. They were hung with white lace curtains, like the windows in the parlor of a mansion, with overdrapes of crimson damask. The partition between them had been removed and they were thrown into one for this evening. The curving fronts were draped with flags, caught up in the middle and adorned by a framed picture of Washington. Where was Mr. Lincoln? There was a young lady sitting close to the railing, watching the play as if her life depended on it, and a young officer behind her left shoulder, and yes, there was Mrs. Lincoln, with her light eyes, small, sulky mouth and vainglorious nose, a girlish wreath of flowers on her brown hair. But where was—? Oh, there! He was nearly hidden behind the draperies but nobody could mistake that stiff hair, sallow temple, high cheek and mossy beard. There he sat. Ready and waiting. Watching the play and laughing. All set.

Johnny took a good look. Then he stepped back out into the lobby, the box and its four occupants like a picture on his mind—reading from left to right: girl, soldier, Mrs. Lincoln, President. He crossed the lobby in no great hurry and went up the stairs leading to the dress circle. Hat in hand he skirted around the outer row of seats, walking softly on the carpeted floor until he came to the small white door that led to the corridor off which the doors to the two upper boxes opened. He put his hand on the knob



and turned it. The door opened and he went in, shutting it behind him.

Quite a few minutes before, the President's bodyguard had slipped into an empty seat in the first balcony where he was laughing his head off at all the funny sayings and doings of Lord Dundreary. Lord Dundreary was a character if there ever was one. The bodyguard didn't see the black shadow that slipped past. Nothing was going to hurt Mr. Lincoln. Nothing ever had. Nobody needed to watch him. . . . Mr. Lincoln would say so himself, if asked. He'd say, "Oh, go ahead and watch the play. Nobody needs to guard me." The bodyguard would bet his bottom dollar. He had to get his handkerchief out and wipe his eyes. That Dundreary! Split a fellow's sides.

Mr. Lincoln did not know that he was unguarded, but something cold came, a presentiment, something, like a draft. He shivered and got up and got his overcoat and put it on. His wife and Miss Harris did not notice it, or pull their light wraps up over their bare shoulders. He clasped his big hands together, one warming the other. Funny. There must be a draft somewhere. But then, he was always cold. His blood had a long way to travel to his hands and feet.

Nobody saw Johnny open the door and go into the corridor to the private boxes. Nobody saw him shut the door behind him.

He knew where to put up the bar of wood three and one half feet long that stood in the corner: into the groove dug out of the wall to his left. Then wedge the other end tight against the door. It worked fine, the way it had worked this afternoon when he tried it out. Johnny stood back and looked at it. They'd have a time getting in. Wouldn't they, though?

Now he turned and approached the door to his left. It led to the box closest to the audience, the one in which Mrs. Lincoln and Lincoln were sitting. There was another door directly ahead but that led to the space occupied by the young lady and the officer. This door to his left had a gimlet hole in it, bored this afternoon and reamed carefully around the edge with a penknife. Johnny put his right eye up against it and looked in. They . . . were . . . close . . . now . . . the people in the box . . . life size, natural. . . .

While he looked in, Mrs. Lincoln leaned over and spoke to Lincoln. She smiled, and Johnny could see her so plain, he could see the filling in her eyetooth, and the hole in her ear where the wire of her tiny sapphire earring went in. Her husband's shaggy head inclined to her for a moment. Johnny got his gun ready.

Up until this moment he had been thinking.

As he walked up the stairs, as he leaned against a pillar and stood looking over the audience, as he went to the door of the corridor to the boxes and opened it and went in, as he barred it, as he advanced and spied through the tiny hole, he had been thinking one thing only: that this was himself, Johnny Booth, with a gun in his hand going to shoot the President of the United States. The thought running in his mind was like an engine making always the same pattern of sound, and he was so used to it he didn't hear it any more.

But he heard it stop. It stopped, the words stopped that this was Johnny Booth going to . . . and made an eerie room of his brain, pitch dark, cold, empty. The assassin that Madam Tussaud was to make out of wax and stand behind the wax President, eternally about to die, would have the same kind of head on his shoulders as he had, empty as a drum.

He twisted the knob without a sound and pushed open the door and entered.

The box was red papered, lit only by the reflected glare from the stage. Through the thick lace curtains it had a fitful, ruddy glow, like a cave with a dying fire, too dim to see that the carpet on the floor was red, too, and the chairs upholstered in rich red velvet.

Mrs. Mountchessington, the middle-aged female, said staggily to the hero of the play: "I am sure, Mr. Trenchard, you are not used to the manners of good society, and that, alone, will excuse the impertinence of which you have been guilty." She flounced off. The hero looked after her comically. The audience tittered. Then the hero spoke: "Don't know the manners of good society, eh? Well, I guess I know enough to turn you inside out, old gal—you sock-dologizing old man-trap."

The audience roared.

Within its laughter, as borne upon a wave, Johnny with his gun

ready to fire took two steps up to the back of the head, and it was like encountering a planet. He raised his gun. You couldn't miss a target like that? You couldn't miss the Colossus of Rhodes sitting in a mahogany rocking chair with legs crossed? If you could hit the side of a barn door, you could surely. . . .

Johnny could. He pulled the trigger. And did.

The gun went off with a ridiculously small sound. His voice, too, when he opened his mouth and shouted "*Sic semper tyrannis!*" came out a shrill and tinny noise, not loud.

When Lincoln went down it was with no biff, bang, kerthump, like a boulder pushed off a mountain. He never made a sound, but stayed right where he was, sitting in his rocking chair, and his chin settled down on his chest like a man asleep on a train.

Johnny's head started working and his eyes darted everywhere. He dropped his gun and it thudded on the carpet at his feet. He grabbed the sharp little dagger in his right hand. Mrs. Lincoln saw that something fearful was happening but she did not know what. Miss Harris saw but did not know. Major Rathbone made a dive for him and Johnny thrust upward at him viciously, ripping the sleeve, slicing the flesh of the long arm, nicking the bone, while blood oozed soft after the knife.

It took ten seconds, all this. And what was the audience doing? Nothing. As if by an enchanter's trick, it had a glass bell set down over its good humor and bewilderment. Through the glass it could see a man in the President's box fight with another man, shove him away, duck through the lace curtains, grasp the velvet railing, vault lightly over, come down—say, that was a long jump!—not effortlessly, though, as one expected, for look, his spur is caught on that looped-up flag—listen to it tear!—ah, there he comes—landed on his feet, too!—but he must have cracked his ankle or hurt himself, for down he goes on all fours. Say! Who is that, anyway? What's he doing? What kind of a performance is this?

Look at him! He's up now—he injured his leg—must have—look at him running diagonally across the stage to the left—hopping—he's hopping, isn't he?—and what's that little flutter of blue at his heel? Why, it's a piece ripped out of the flag, caught on his

spur. Look—he's going out the door. There's his black hat on the stage. He lost it. He's gone! Who was that, anyway? What was he doing? What kind of a performance is this?

Mary Lincoln's scream shattered the bell of enchantment to bits. It burst into a million pieces.

"Help me!"

Johnny went fast when he got through the door backstage, and nobody stopped him. All the actors and actresses and stagehands stayed right where they were, doing whatever they were doing, surprised to stone. He collided with the orchestra leader and slashed at him with his dagger as though he might have been alive and of evil intent instead of nobody and nothing. Then he hopped past the piled-up scenery, the dressing room doors, the covered stairway to the basement, out the back door and into the dark alley.

His horse was right where he left her, the stagehand, Ned Spangler holding the reins, because she wouldn't be hitched, not her, the little bitch.

"Ned, Ned, listen—!" Johnny is as out of breath as though he had run five miles.

"Mr. Booth, is that you?" Peanuts John, the boy who does odd jobs about the theater and sells peanuts between the acts, steps forward out of the darkness. "Ned couldn't stay, Mr. Booth. They need him inside. So he told me to hold—"

Why should Mr. Booth hit him a crack?

"Let go, you idiot!"

Peanuts John could not seem to let loose of the reins.

"Let go, damn you!"

He let loose then and away went Mr. Booth!

Now, that was a fine way to do, wasn't it?

The bright little bay, with black legs, black mane, black tail and a white star on her forehead like Hesperus, flew down the alley to F Street at a thundering gallop. People in the alley huts ran to look out.

Peanuts John, his mouth wide open, saw the sparks fly out as the iron shoes clanged and banged over the cobblestones—cha-gallop,

cha-gallop, cha-gallop—saw the sparks fly out in the dark from under the iron hoofs as they struck the stones, saw a demon riding away on a demon horse.

He stared until there was nothing more to see.

Now, that was a fine way to do!



---

## II

*"I have given up all!"*

—BOOTH'S DIARY

---

THE LAST time through Washington! Past the Herndon House, past the Patent Office, to the corner of Fifth and F! The undersized horse shot ahead and galloped over the cinder pathway under the juicy leaves of the fresh-leaved trees of Judiciary Square to Indiana Avenue! Then past the back door of the Capitol, past it on First Street NW., past the south side of it on B Street, to Pennsylvania Avenue SE., down Eleventh Street SE.—nobody behind, nobody following—listen, not a sound!—to the Navy Yard Bridge! Like a light ball lightly tossed, the moon sailed up and over, scattering the clouds as she went.

The Navy Yard Bridge led over into Maryland across the eastern branch of the Potomac River. Johnny went this way because he was going to follow the great Confederate Underground Mail Route that messages, passengers and even light freight had passed along through Washington to Canada and England, all during the war. This led first to Surrattsville, then to Beantown, to Port Tobacco, across the Rappahannock to Port Royal—at the crossroads steering clear of the glutted Richmond Pike—then to Bowling Green, Richmond, then down into the deep, dank South—from there, to any safe place, never to be caught or punished, safe as houses! There were friends to Southern sympathizers all along this mail route, everybody knew.

So Johnny went that way, perfectly certain that people would take him in, hide, feed and rest him, lend him fresh horses, press a warm coat upon his back and offer him brandy. All the maidens in their fine hair would thrill to think of such a hero going through,

slayer of that despot and worse, Abraham Lincoln, who made life a torment for so many. The daughters of the houses would blush with delight when they offered dainty shirts, stitched by their own fair hands. Their eyes would shimmer with tears when they said good-by, wishing him Godspeed. All wives and women would offer their love as he went by, the men and boys crowding up to shake his hand, and the children being reminded: You must well remember the day of seeing *him*.

Yes, that was the way to go, down the great underground mail route. It was the only way, down through Maryland, for that battleground Virginia was still swarming with troops and its shore could hardly be landed on with safety, unless one went far down the line to cross the Potomac.

A sentry on the Navy Yard Bridge heard him coming, stepped out and called "Halt!" Johnny halted and a young sergeant appeared to see who he might be. He had orders: be careful whom you let pass.

"Who are you?" the Sergeant asked briskly.

The glittering little horse snorted and stamped and the drops ran off her, but her rider was calm and smiling.

"The name is Booth, sir," he said.

"Where you been?"

"To the city."

"Where you going?"

"Home."

"Where's home?"

"In the Charleses, if you please."

"What's the name of the town?"

"Oh, no town. Not far from Beantown, though." Johnny took out his handkerchief and blew his nose. "Got a little place there."

"Beantown? What kind of a town is that?"

Johnny laughed. He put his handkerchief away. "Good God, don't tell me you've never been there, Captain!"

The Sergeant scowled upward. "Don't you know there's a law that you can't cross this here bridge after nine o'clock at night? Nobody can't."

"No, I didn't," Johnny said. "It's news to me. I haven't been to town for quite a while."

The Sergeant kept on scowling. "Why didn't you start home earlier?—It's going on for eleven."

"Well, I thought if I waited I'd have the moon to ride home by." He smiled.

"You got her," the Sergeant said, unbending somewhat. They both glanced upward at her whiteness, through her white rays. "I guess you can pass."

"Good evening to you then!" Johnny lifted his hand in an airy salute that was half a wave; the sentry and the Sergeant drew back and he started his horse off in a walk. No matter how his heart beat, no matter how his blood raced, with these armed soldiers behind him, he forced himself to hold the little mare in. He forced himself to let her walk slowly all the way across the long wooden bridge, clip clop, clip clop, like a peddler's horse hitched to a wagon. As she plodded over the noisy, uneven planks in the moonlight she recovered her wind somewhat.

But not for long! Now they were over the bridge, their echo like a ghostly rider behind them, above the quiet rippling water! Now they were down on solid ground again where a few houses and a store or two, clustering along the road for some two or three hundred feet, called themselves the village of Anacostia, and the feel of the road sent the horse bolting ahead. Then—yes, this was the sharp left turn to follow, and the road up Good Hope Hill. They took it.

The man coming down the road proved to be only a tall boy. Johnny reined up and the horse halted, but she stamped and danced.

"Is this the right road to Surrattsville?" he asked.

"Yes, sir, it is," the boy said.

As he looked upward he brushed his hand quickly across his eyes, but not so quickly that Johnny did not see the glint of tears. The first person he met to be crying! Why? For whom? Had he heard the news? A shiver went through him as though a black cat had crossed his path. "Why should you be crying?"

The boy swallowed. "It's Pa," he said. "I'm working down near

Beantown and today I got word that my father, he's dying, in the city. So I started out—"

"I'm sorry," Johnny said, relaxing. He wasn't crying for *him* then. "Maybe when you get home it won't be as bad as you think. Maybe he'll get better."

The boy shook his head.

"I'm sorry," Johnny repeated. "Listen, has anybody come by here?"

"Nobody for quite a while," the boy said.

"Nobody on a light roan? Black tail and mane?"

"I never seen nobody."

"Young fellow?"

"Not that I seen."

Johnny turned and looked down the road, then back to the boy. "Thanks," he said. "And better luck than you look for."

"The same to you, mister." The boy went on.

At the top of the hill Johnny swerved into a little glade and looked anxiously down the way he had come, the road bright in the moonlight. The boy was a mere speck now, and soon he disappeared. The mare shook her mane and snorted under the low branches of the trees. Johnny leaned forward in the saddle and patted her neck. "There, there," he said soothingly, "good girl, that's my girl." Still patting, he again peered down the road. It was very still. He could hear his watch ticking. How long would it be? How long would he have to wait? How long could he wait? But there—listen—wasn't that a gallop? He strained his ears, his heart beginning to pound. It was! And here came a light roan with a black tail and mane, galloping for all she was worth. He rode out onto the road again.

"David!" he hollered. "David!"

"Oh, Lord, Johnny. I'm glad I caught up to you finally," the rider exclaimed, pulling up so short that the mud flew. He gave an explosive sigh. This was David E. Herold, not twenty, with a fuzz upon his cheeks that the razor had never touched, ready to burst out laughing and not be able to stop, ready to bawl at a rebuke, ready to follow his idol to the world's end.

"Where's Lewis?" Johnny asked. "Is he coming? We haven't got

much time. Did you two do what I told you? Is Seward dead?"

"I don't know, Johnny. I was outside on my horse, holding Lewis' horse the way you told me, and he was inside the house—and all of a sudden all this yelling started and here come the nigger butler running out the front door yelling bloody murder—and people started coming—so I got scared and rode off and left Lewis' horse there. I thought I better skedaddle!"

"He'd have followed you if he got away—if he wasn't stopped at the Navy Yard Bridge—"

"I got by the sentries all right," David bragged. "They come out and asked who I was and where I was going. I says I was going home to White Plains. 'What you doing out so late?' they says. 'Been visiting my lady love on Capitol Hill,' I says. Give 'em a wink." He burst out laughing. "So anyway, they let me come on across. They took a good look at me, though. They'll know me if they see me again. But they won't see me again, that's the joke of it. Nobody will!" He laughed again. "Ma'll be wild, though, so will the girls. Glory, they'll be wild." David had a widowed mother and seven sisters.

"You don't know whether he's dead, then?"

"Seward?" David shook his head. "Lewis was inside and then all this yelling started and people started coming and I—"

"Well, come on," Johnny said. "We haven't got time to wait. If he got away he'll follow us down the route. He knows the road we planned to take."

They touched spurs to their horses and went galloping off, down the other side of Good Hope Hill, taking the road to the right and then to the left, David leading the way.

If only Lewis Payne and David Herold, his two henchmen, had done the job he gave them to do! Johnny thought as he rode along. Then Secretary of State Seward would be dead as well as the President and he would have accomplished still more, given the Confederacy yet another reason to call him hero and savior and heap honors upon him. But that was the way of it. Never trust anybody but yourself. If *he* had been told to go to Secretary of State Seward's mansion and get into the bedroom of the Secretary, who was lying in bed with a broken arm, and murder him, he would



have done it! He swore under his breath.

They had gone only half a mile or so when Johnny drew rein and called to David to stop. He did, rather far up ahead, and wheeled his horse around and rode back to ask what was wrong. "It's my leg," Johnny said, wincing with pain. "I didn't realize how bad I must have hurt it. I think my ankle's broken. And this damn horse rocks back and forth like a rocking chair. How about trading me?"

David was off his horse in an instant and beside Johnny. "'You didn't say nothing about getting hurt, Johnny. You didn't say nothing about no leg!" He was greatly concerned.

"I guess I forgot it myself in the excitement," Johnny said, "but now it's throbbing and paining like the very devil."

"What did you do to it? Bruise it or something? Bump into something?" David helped Johnny to dismount and with great gentleness used all his strength to boost him into the saddle of his own horse. Then he climbed up on Johnny's little mare. "What'd you do to your leg?" he asked.

Johnny was gasping with the pain of the move. He drew deep breaths and bent far forward, recovering. Under his black hair his face was as white as a woman's in a dead faint. "I jumped," he said. "I took that jump out of the box. Some idiot had hung a curtain or something up there on the front of the box and I got caught in it, caught my spur." He glanced downward at his left heel and saw the spur was missing. "I caught on this damn curtain or whatever it was, and instead of jumping, I fell. I think I broke my ankle."

"You—really—did—do—it—then?" David asked.

"Do what?"

"What you said you was going to do? Assassinate—kill President Lincoln?"

"Did you think I was talking through my hat? Of course I did," Johnny said scornfully.

David opened his mouth, shut it, then opened it again and said, "Is he really dead?"

"Of course he's dead. Wouldn't he be dead with a bullet in his brain? A derringer hand-cast? Wouldn't you imagine?"

"Glory," David said, almost too awed to speak. "You really did

it. How did you get away? It was right during the play, wasn't it, and all the audience right there and everything, wasn't it? Wasn't that what you told us this afternoon you was going to do?"

"If you'd listen once in a while instead of nothing but blab for a change," Johnny said, "I'd tell you. The third act was on, the way I planned. Second scene. I went upstairs and entered his box and—that was all there was to it." He was silent a moment, thinking. "Just before I fired I said, '*Sic semper tyrannis!*'"

"Why did you say that?" David was hanging on every word, staring at him.

"Why, because that means *Ever thus to tyrants*. It's the state motto of Virginia."

"Oh." David looked blank. "Didn't he try to jump up or nothing?"

"He never moved."

"What about his wife? Didn't she scream or nothing?"

"There was a Union officer sitting pretty close to him. But he didn't get far. So then I climbed on the railing and jumped down onto the stage and got away, out the back door."

"In—front—of—all—the—people? The audience? Or had they all gone home?"

"Of course they hadn't all gone home, you dolt. Didn't I just tell you the play was going on?"

"Didn't they do *nothing*?"

"Not a thing."

David considered this. "Glory, I'd of liked to been there. Why, you must of jumped twenty feet. Right in front of everybody, killed the President, jumped down on the stage, run out the back and nobody lifted a finger."

"Oh, it's not twenty feet. More like thirteen or fourteen."

"But glory to God, Johnny. It's a wonder you didn't break your neck instead of your leg. I would of, I bet."

"It's my ankle."

David turned his dazzled eyes upon it.

"It hurts like blazes," Johnny said.

"Maybe it'll quit after a while, Johnny," David said hopefully.

"Maybe it will."

"Shall we go on then?"

"We sure as hell can't stop here."

They started again, childish David in a dream about the deed of murder, marveling that his companion Johnny—his own friend—had done so rash a deed in front of thousands of people and got away to tell the tale.

"When we get to Surrattsville," Johnny said after a few moments, "I won't get off the horse. You go into the inn and get Mr. Lloyd to give you the things, won't you? And have him bring out a bottle. Brandy, but he knows that already."

"All right, Johnny. How you sitting?"

"I think I wrenched my back, too, it's paining me, but this is a better horse. Nothing like that little bitch you've got. She rocks like a rocking chair. Listen, David."

"What?"

"Be sure Lloyd gives you everything, won't you? The carbines, the ammunition, the field glasses and some brandy. Listen, though, I think we'll just take the one carbine. You can carry it. It'd be too much of a load for me with my leg like this. So tell Lloyd he can keep the other one."

"All right, I'll tell him."

They galloped on and soon were entering the village of Surrattsville. Here, at the inn, young John Surratt, another henchman, about six weeks before had brought out and deposited what they were going to need if, and when, they kidnaped Abraham Lincoln—Spencer carbines, a monkey wrench, coils of rope and other things. Months before, with Johnny at the head, six young men had banded together in a great scheme to kidnap the President and stop the war, but nothing came of it and the idea was abandoned. However, in the midst of their preparations they had deposited these things at the inn, and that was handy, for these two could pick them up tonight.

On the left-hand side of the road they saw the Old Surratt House, glimpses of it, set in a thick grove of trees. There was a light in the northwest corner, in a room used as a barroom. They rode around to the porch on that side and in a moment David was off his horse and up the stairs and knocking on the door.

The door opened a crack and a fat face peered out. "What you want? Who is it?" The man was drunk and spoke thickly.

"It's us," David said. "We want the things Surratt brought out. That is, not all, but some of them."

"Who's out there?"

"Just me and Johnny. Johnny Booth."

"The actor?"

"John Wilkes Booth."

Lloyd pushed the door open. "Come on in," he hollered into the darkness. "How about a drink?"

"Send out the bottle with David there," Johnny called. "I've hurt my leg and can't get on and off the horse very easily."

"Jumping out of a box," David explained, following the innkeeper inside. "Twenty feet or more. At Harry Ford's Theater tonight."

"Well, that's an actor for you."

Johnny had time only to draw a sigh or two before David was outside again, out the door and across the porch and beside him. "Here," he said, holding up the bottle.

Johnny took it, put it to his mouth, took a long swig, swallowed, sputtered and handed the bottle back. "That's not brandy, damn it to hell. I didn't ask for whisky!"

"It was all he had, he said."

"I told him what I wanted!"

"It was all he had."

"Damn his soul to hell."

"Oh, go on," David wheedled. "This'll wet your whistle just as good. It ain't so terrible. Go on and drink some more. Maybe we won't get nothing for a long time. Go ahead and drink it, Johnny."

Johnny did, changed his mind. He drank deep and handed back the bottle. "You tell him I said damn his soul to hell," but some of the venom had gone out of his voice.

"All right, I'll tell him."

Lloyd was standing at the door when David went back up on the porch. "Johnny says damn your soul to hell for this stuff instead of brandy."

"Best I could do, Johnny," Lloyd called into the darkness tipsily, with great good humor. "All I had."

They heard an actorlike "Pah!" and both laughed.

In another two or three minutes David was back on his horse and they were ready to ride away. Lloyd had followed him out and stood swaying before them. "Which way you fellows headed?"

"Down the mail route."

"Crossing the river at Port Tobacco?"

"Yep," David said.

"Why dontcha stop over?" the innkeeper begged. "Everybody around here goes to bed with the chickens."

"Would you like to hear a little piece of news?" Johnny asked him suddenly.

"Yes," David put in.

"What kind of news? I don't care whether I hear any news or not," Lloyd said. "No news is good news."

"Well, you might like to hear this," Johnny said. "We've assassinated the President and Secretary Seward."

Lloyd's face changed. "The President?" he said. He staggered a little. "President LINCOLN?"

"We're pretty sure we have," David said proudly. "Me and him. Him, rather."

The two young men glanced at each other, exchanging a look of amusement that the innkeeper was so flabbergasted by their information. Then Johnny dug his one spur into the roan, David followed, and together they rode out onto the main road again, the drunken man staring stupidly after them and saying, "Why, it'd take an *army* to do that. It'd take an *army*."

It was just before they reached the tiny hamlet of T. B., five miles south of Surrattsville, where six roads branched out in as many directions, that Johnny called another halt and announced a change in their plans. It was called T. B. because of the initials of one Thomas Brooke on a stone at the crossroads, marking a section of the land he owned. There wasn't much more to it than the stone.

"I've got to have my leg seen to," he said. "I feel like the bone is tearing through the flesh at every jump. I've got to have it bandaged up. I've got to."

"Sure," David said anxiously. "But where'll we go? Back to Surrattsville? Is there a doctor back there we could go to?"



"What I've been thinking," Johnny said, "is that we'd ought to swing off to the east about here and try to get to a doctor's place I know. Dr. Mudd, his name is. I got acquainted with him last winter. He lives a mile or two from Bryantown. He'll fix my ankle. Besides, maybe we could stay there for a while. I—I don't feel so well. It must be that rotten liquor."

Instead, then, of turning to the west at the crossroads and taking the much nearer road to Port Tobacco, where they intended to cross the Potomac in a friend's boat and get over to the safe Virginia side, they had to turn east, to Upper Marlboro, and ride for Bryantown.

Three miles from T. B. they crossed some railroad tracks. "The Baltimore and Potomac and Pope's Creek Railroad," David said, like a conscientious guide on a tour. "My nose keeps taking a notion to want to run," he added. "Ain't it cold, though? This here's where you go from Prince George into Charles County." He put his handkerchief up to his nose and blew loudly.

"It's like the middle of winter instead of April," Johnny said bitterly. "And we've got fifteen miles at the very least to go."

"What's this stream?" he asked in a few moments when they rode over the little bridge.

"It's a creek, Mattawoman Creek," David said. "There's lots of ducks and reedbirds in these here swamps along here. The swamps run along for quite a ways. It's pretty in the daytime when the weather's nice. Me and my dad used to go hunting around here. The Judas trees—"

"God, I'm cold."

"—the Judas trees," David went on, "they'll sure be a sight for sore eyes in the daytime now. Pink, they get. Kind of pinkish."

"It was warm this time last year."

"All along here, it'll be pretty in the daytime," the boy persisted.

They came to another little village, Beantown, where a cross gleamed brightly on the cupola of a ghostly little church to their left. They flashed through the village and came to a graveyard in the forks of the road.

"Now which way?" David asked.

"Which road leads to Bryantown?" Johnny said.



"The one to the right."

"Then it's this one straight ahead."

"Come on, then," David said. "A graveyard gives me the creeps. Let's get going. One of my uncles claimed he seen somebody sitting on every single tombstone, once. He had to pass by a graveyard. They was spirits. You could see right through 'em. Woo," he said. "That's the last sight I'd want to see." He shivered and reached for his handkerchief again.

Johnny's teeth were beginning to chatter and he folded his arms over his chest, holding the reins in his cold fists.

"Say, look how light it's getting," David said. "Well, that's a blessing, ain't it?"

"It looks darker than ever to me," Johnny said. "We want to keep our eyes open for a gate along here someplace on the right-hand side of the road. We must have come two miles. It's two miles from the graveyard that the gate's supposed to be. We might have passed it." His sigh sounded like a groan. "Maybe we'd better turn and go back." He passed his hand across his face, ran his fingers angrily through his hair. "That's all we need! To get lost. To make everything perfect!"

"There's your gate for you," David called out reassuringly.

And there it was. It stood open and they turned and rode through it, up the straight, narrow road a quarter of a mile through a field to the large house where Dr. Samuel A. Mudd lived. Johnny had made his acquaintance a few months before when in the neighborhood to buy a horse. He knew the house well, for twice he had slept there as guest of the hospitable Mudd family. The doctor could fix Johnny's leg and give him shelter. Maybe he and David could stay right here until everything blew over. What a comfortable bed they had given him, what good meals they put upon the table, how charming young Mrs. Mudd was. David and he would stay right here until everything blew over and then go away to Mexico or perhaps abroad, maybe to England or France. These thoughts were comforting and Johnny yawned cavernously.

"Bed's going to feel good, huh, Johnny?"

"I'm going to sleep for a solid week," he said. "David, you get off and knock at that door there on the right. That's the front door."

They halted under the trees and David did as he was bid, dismounted and went swiftly to the door. He put up his knuckles and knocked, first softly, then sharply and loudly.

Down the long hall, in the big bedroom to the right, young Dr. Mudd raised himself up on his elbow and listened.

"That's somebody at the door," he said.

His wife sat up quickly. "What could they want?" she said. "It's the middle of the night!"

The doctor leaned over and lit a match, squinting down at the big watch that ticked as loudly as a clock on the washstand by the bed. "It's nearly four," he said, shaking the match out.

Knock, knock, knock!

He got up and a shiver ran over him when the cold air struck his bare skin. "Well, I guess I'd better go see," he said, reaching for clothes enough to cover him.

"You be careful, Sam, won't you?"

"It's probably Pa's gallstones again."

Knock, knock!

Lightly he stooped and gave his wife a kiss that just grazed her temple. "I'll be back in a minute, lovey," he said.

Four years, lovey. They will arrest him for treason and assassination, imprison him, stick his head in a padded canvas bag through the hottest days of summer, chain him and try him before a corrupt jury. Then they will sentence and ship him away to a dungeon in a fortress on the Dry Tortugas, where death grows, and disease, rich as verdure. He'll be back. But he won't be the same again, lovey. Never again.

"Is somebody coming?" Johnny called fretfully. "My God, you'd think they'd have the decency to answer the door."

"Maybe they moved," David said. He laid his ear close to the door and listened. "Here comes somebody," he announced over his shoulder. "I hear somebody coming now."

A dim light moved across a window.

"Thank God," Johnny said.

Weary and trembling as he was, he took out a little tortoise-shell comb and with care and precision combed his chill black hair.

---

# III

*"What Brutus was honored for."*

—BOOTH'S DIARY

---

FAR UP in the luxurious box a spiral of small smoke vanishes. The blue and white Treasury Guard flag, slashed by the assassin's sharp spur, hangs degenerate, and the picture of Washington, slightly teetering, looks lopsided. In that dim high place behind the rich curtains, a woman screams outlandishly, screams again. She grabs for the man who sits with his chin upon his chest as if in sleep and shakes him. He does not wake.

The actors backstage, or slowly coming forward onstage, are not yet turned to live people, except one, Miss Laura Keene. She is the leading lady. She has reddish hair and the blood-brown eyes that go with it. She has hidden her russet freckles under thick white powder.

It gives her a thrill of powerful pleasure to use her trained voice like a whip upon this maddened beast, the audience. "Keep quiet, be calm, pass down the aisles quietly," the elocutionist perfectly enunciates. "All will be well, keep calm. Keep calm. . . ."

They carried him between the crowds of people, out into the damp, moonlit night. They stepped upon the cold cobblestones and wondered which way to carry him and where to go. Three doctors clung close, and hundreds of people clung to his going like bees to a stump.

Across the street from the theater the door of a small brick house stood open, a rectangle of yellow lamplight in the darkness. A man came through it out onto the small porch. He looked down the flight of steps and called, "What's the matter? What's happened?"

All of them told him, and then the litter and bearers came sinu-

ously up the stairs, attracted by the light, and the man, fleeing backward, gave way to the procession. He led them and their burden down the long hall to the bedroom at the end of it. He was a drunken, cruel fellow, this landlord and owner of the house, but there was domestic pride to him, too. When he flung open the bedroom door and lit the gas lamp, he was glad that his miserable wife, now on a visit to Baltimore, had left the chamber so clean and neat.

Down the stairs from the floors above came the young men who lodged there. One was a portrait painter. He saw the face, with discoloring shut eyelids, of the man they were carrying. ("The President has been shot and is dying.") He said in his mind: I did not know he was so beautiful.

The room to lodge the dying was long and narrow. It had a Brussels carpet on the floor and warm brown paper on the walls, hung with lithographs and engravings: Rosa Bonheur's "Horse Fair," Herrings' "Village Blacksmith," "The Stable," "The Barn Yard." If he had opened his eyes and looked, Lincoln would have seen these. And Mrs. Peterson, the absent landlady, would have been proud if he had gazed upon her fancy crocheting, too, displayed here, there and everywhere. Not a towel, pillowcase, pincushion, washcloth or doily but bore her nervous handiwork. There was a bureau with deep drawers, and a table. Chairs were handed over people's heads in at the door until there were eight straight parlor chairs, all there was space for.

The bed was a low walnut four-poster, covered with a woven bedspread. Busy hands turned it back at first, then took it clear off and bundled it up and dropped it at the foot of the bed. They turned back the covers, too, and mussed up the bed as they did so. Somebody tucked in the edges of the bottom sheet that had come untucked, but did not do it without leaving wrinkles, so that when they slid Lincoln in, sideways—for he was too big and tall to lie straight up and down—he lay upon the wrinkles all night. But he did not care, or feel any discomfort. For the long ordeal ahead, he was very snug indeed.

The young officer, Major Rathbone, had tried to assist Mrs.



Lincoln, now quiet but crying fretfully as a woman cries who has been slighted and had her feelings hurt. He had lost quite a lot of blood and began fainting so often that they had to take him home in his ruined uniform.

Miss Harris, his fiancée, was very sorry about this, or she would have been sorry if she could have collected her thoughts enough to consider the matter. After weeping helplessly, moaning, biting her handkerchief and having her feet stepped on by everybody who rushed into the box, she managed to put herself into the way of friends. They carried her off and took her safely home, with enormous care, as though she had been a piece of Meissen, for she was very famous that night, having been a member of the President's party. She never was so famous again, even many years later when she herself was murdered, by the hand of her husband (this same Major Rathbone).

They sent for Robert, the Lincoln son, and he hurried there. Half the time he let his mother twine him in her grief, half the time he considered or stared upon the astonishing fact of Father helpless, who had never been so before. In his new and modish uniform, a pretty blue-eyed captain of twenty-two, Robert felt sad and during the long night often took his handkerchief out and blew his nose and cried. However, Father had never been as intimate with his eldest son, as warmly intimate, as with everyone else. Even when he was little, the talking in parables had distressed Robert. The jokes, too, somewhat. A graduate of Harvard College, he was a cut above Father. Mostly Todd, humorless, a conformist, full of fierce pride, he took care to look and speak and act as little like his father as possible, and succeeded in seeming almost no kin to him. The painfully unique man who was—well, Father, of course, but pusher and doer, lawyer, politician, party man, President, with the deadly determined will to climb up on top of the heap and stay there until he had to be assassinated like a king—that man had used up most of the air of Robert's world, taken up most of the landscape. Him hewn down, the boy would suddenly see, and be amazed to see, how far space went.

He cried for the unfamiliarity of the hours, and the frightening promise of the sudden view. This very morning Father had said,

"Now, listen to me, Robert: You must lay aside your uniform and return to college. I wish you to read law for three years, and at the end of that time I hope we shall be able to tell whether you will make a lawyer or not." (Now, the only business Father had to mind was his own, that of dying. . . .)

Mary Todd Lincoln could only sit on the slick sofa in the front parlor of the house picked out by fate to be the famous one where died the Great Emancipator and cry and cry that anyone could be so thoughtless and inconsiderate as to do this to her. It was a horrible place to have to stay all night, she complained. The parlor was clean, with presentable furniture—two cabinets with a predominance of large sea shells displayed upon them, one on either side of the fireplace, a horsehair sofa across from it, so slippery and round that it was almost impossible for a plump, short-legged woman in a stiff corset and full, glassy skirt to sit upon it. There was also a large oval center table dismally clothed in dark green, and a stand against the front wall between the two lace-curtained front windows. It was a carpeted room, but cold. Someone brought wood in and built a fire, but it was damp and didn't catch well, and nobody regularly tended it, so that it sputtered feebly and almost died all night long, with no more warmth to it than a ghost fire over a swamp. The fireplace didn't seem to draw the way it should. Currents of cold air came from no known place. "Shut the door, Robert," his mother begged wretchedly, but the parlor door was shut most of the time, except when official-seeming men came in and out. "There's a terrible draft from somewhere." She knew she would catch her death of cold, and cried that anybody could abuse and treat her so. Her back ached, her shoulder ached, she had a pain in her neck.

Someone brought in another lamp, small and oil burning, of hand-painted glass, and set it down on the center table, but the dark wallpaper greedily drank up its streaming yellow, and the overhead gas jets only made the room gloomier.

Through the big double doors the back parlor looked lighter and brighter, a better place to be. Only there was no place to sit down, unless one counted the tumbled bed in the corner some lodger or lodgers had been routed out of, to make room for the night-long



watchers over the President. They often left the small back chamber where he was lying and came into it to whisper together and stretch their legs. Here, too, a ghost fire spectrally burned in the fireplace. A bureau stood at the far end of the room between the two long windows that looked out upon the back porch, and there was a washstand, center table and chair. Even if there had been a rocking chair, close by a roaring fire, Mary Lincoln would have thought twice before going in and taking it. For near the archway between this front and back parlor stood another table, and at it, writing out dispatch after dispatch, sat Edwin M. Stanton, Secretary of War, the last man with whom Mary Lincoln wanted to sit.

Stanton kept going into the shadowy little bedroom where they had pulled the bed over under the flickering gas jet, allowing it to shine upon the dying man. It did not trouble him, though. The sun could have been hung up there and the shut eyes, velvet curtained under the dark lids with suffusing blood, would not have blinked.

Stanton, who "never wanted energy," would rather be writing dispatches in the back parlor any day than sitting on a dining-room chair at his chief's bedside waiting for the man to die. He wrote some fierce ones that night, dozens of them, calling General Grant back to defend the Capitol. Surely they were about to be attacked by an enemy *not* defeated, as was supposed, *not* without arms, food, clothing or the will to go on fighting, but mysteriously reanimated, accoutered and ready to do battle, as the troops in Valhalla are ready to do battle every morning, even if hacked to little pieces the night before! He sent orders to the prisons that eagle-eyed watchfulness should be kept over rebel officers and soldiers, to the forts that they be ready, with guns manned. He wrote out message after message that the President was dying. . . . But he kept going back to the little bedroom crowded with uncomfortable small chairs and uncomfortable big men—Secretary of the Navy Welles, Attorney General Speed, Quartermaster General Meigs, Surgeon General Barnes, William Dennison, Charles Sumner, General Halleck—who had never before had to do such a thing as sit in on the dying of a president and hardly knew how to do it. They learned, staying in one position so long, that a hand or foot went to sleep or began to twitch with shooting pains, moving only to find, not comfort, but a

new source of weariness and unease. They cleared their throats from time to time, used handkerchiefs, always self-consciously, never without consciousness of self, and spoke in as great an undertone as if a favorite child, long ill and wakeful, had finally dropped into a deep sleep from which one would not risk—no, not for any money—waking him.

Robert gently wrenched himself from the shoots, runners and tendrils of his mother, and came into the room of death that night. But his father, "an entirely public man," embarrassed him with this entirely public dying, too, as with a *gaucherie* of which no man of family and parts would be guilty, and Robert only gazed at him and then helplessly looked at one important, solemn face after another. Out in the hall the strolling, whispering Senators did not stop him when he returned to his mother. They only said, loud enough for him to hear, "Poor boy," or "Poor lad," as he went past.

"Where be his quiddities now, his quilllets, his cases, his tenures, and his tricks?"

Upon his yellow face, the "most lovely" smile does not play. He always said he never could remember a time when he couldn't read and write, but he couldn't spell c-a-t now.

He didn't know where he was or who he was.

And who was he, anyway?

His father said: "First sight of him was nothing to brag on."

His mother said: "He was the child that came, the boy I looked for, the fastener with soft lips, the whimperer in my arms, the little, the long, the grotesque, the beautiful."

His stepmother said: "One look at him—eleven years old and as tall as myself—skeleton, spindle, hoe handle, never could fatten him up—and I knew he was mine. One look at me and he knew I was his. Welcome, says he. Welcome, says I. Oh, nest in my heart forever."

His schoolteachers said: "All his school days together would not make a year, but he was a pig for learning, he never got full."

The boys said: "There was no standing up he couldn't do for himself."

The girls said: "He brought in the biggest backlog, built the

brightest fire—we all sat around, watched the way the sparks flew, told our fortunes. We saw him at meeting and spelling school—he could spell down Shakespeare himself—but there was no standing up he could for himself—let us look rosilily on him, flick him with a sash, brush by him, toss a curl or wink an eye and he was the coward of the world before our beauty—overcome, done for, struck into little pieces. We laughed like ouzels over ridiculous him.”

His stepbrother said: “He contended an ant’s life was as sweet to it as ours to us! He’d pick out some damn fool thing like that and contend it till the cows come home.”

His first employer said: “I knowed right away he could think, and when you got a chance to get hold of a man that can think, you do it. And then, he wanted you to know what he was thinking. No matter how hard it was to explain, he would try and try to put it into words till the biggest simpleton would know what he meant, for this was something he craved—to be heard and understood. He said: ‘I am never easy when I am handling a thought . . . till I have bounded it north, and bounded it south, and bounded it east, and bounded it west.’”

The first Illinois legislature in which he sat as a Whig member said: “Lincoln? Oh, yes, the big, tall fellow. *He* didn’t amount to much.”

The second Illinois legislature said: “We were the famous one. We made history. We changed the state capital from Vandalia to Springfield. Lincoln? We *do* remember—come to think of it—let’s see—we passed a resolution on slavery, resolving that we didn’t want any Abolition societies springing up or Abolition talk spouting, that slaveholding states had the right to do what they damned pleased, that the General Government had no business abolishing slavery in the District of Columbia—and let’s see, this Lincoln—yes, that’s who it was, Lincoln—this Lincoln got smart and entered a protest, but he didn’t get far—he only got one man to sign it with him, a blatherskite from Sangamon, his own county. We remember now—a know-it-all, Lincoln, butting into something that didn’t concern him.”

Stephen A. Douglas said: “We met often in debate when we can-

vassed the state, I a Democrat, he a Whig. I had him whipped any way you'd look at it, but there was something about the man . . . and he wouldn't be whipped. I had him whipped with Mary Todd, too, but there was something . . . and she gave me the air for him after all. Not that I don't praise God, seeing what she's grown—but then, she was a tasty morsel, one of these little-waisted women you could take a bite out of, you could bury your nose down a couple of inches in her flesh and never touch bone—one of those. She had me tossing on my bed many a night, no matter what she is now, and she had him tossing, too, and he's the one that got her."

His wife said, in her heart: "Like they say, I knew he was going to be something important—my brother-in-law and everybody said so, and if I said I wasn't ambitious and didn't want to be married to an important man, like the President of the United States, I'd be telling a fib—but I wanted him because I loved him, too. He was a woman's man, did you know that? He loved and wanted every woman he ever laid eyes on. It's a pleasure to cage a man like that, for he has gazed on all, and judged all, nothing has been too secret and precious for him to gaze upon with his mind's eye, and what is secret and precious of your own, he has found most beautiful. I wanted to bind, blind and wind, stuff up his ears, turn all his love and yearning upon me. But in little streams, in showerings, in a pebble tumbling, or two or three, in jets and breaths—I could never shut off all the places—he escaped me, by eeny and meeny, and I had him, and didn't. He never was really mine. . . ."

He took his seat in Congress in 1847, the only Whig member from Illinois, and the Congress said: "Lincoln? Oh, yes. Tall man. Opposed the Mexican War, didn't he? Cost him his re-election, didn't it?"

The first state convention of the Republican party said: "Abraham Lincoln? Now there's a *lawyer*. There's a *politician*. There's a man we can let do things, and get 'em done the way they'd ought to be done!"

The Republican National Convention of 1860 said: "We nominate Abraham Lincoln of Illinois to the office of President of the United States."



The people said: "We'll take him, thank you!"

The Confederacy, that new thing, said: "Abraham Lincoln is the devil incarnate. That tears it. That does it. Fort Sumter, bang!"

His Cabinet said in seven distinct voices like seven exploding stars upon the sky: "I would be a better man than he is with my hands tied behind my back. Buffoon. Bungler. Babbler. Busybody. Bore. Bigot. Bully. But BOSS."

His generals said: "If only he'd keep the hell out of what doesn't concern him!"

His soldiers said: "We are coming, Father Abraham!"

The slaves said: "He walk de earf like de Lord ob Creation. Massa Linkum am everywhere."

The people said, in 1864: "We'll take him again, thank you, and tickled to get him!"

With the bullet in his brain, he did not know where he was or who he was, or anything, but he was what the Voices said, from the beginning of his life to the end. He was more than the Voices said or dreamed of, more than he dreamed of himself. Once his young hand wrote on the bottom of a page of ciphering:

Abraham Lincoln  
his hand and pen  
he will be good  
but god Knows When. . . .

. . . while One down-looked him, smiling. . . .

The portrait painter, who lived upstairs, and his younger brother went up and down the basement steps all night, carrying bottles of hot water. The surgeons laid these beside the long, cold, dying limbs, and it was a struggle whether the hot water would warm the flesh or the flesh chill the bottles, but the undeflectable cold won out, and in no time a surgeon would feel a bottle, and then another and another, and sigh with exasperation and pull them out from under the covers.

The portrait painter, running upstairs for the fiftieth time, ahead of his brother, said, "I shouldn't be doing this. I should be painting the most wonderful face on earth before it's too late."

"Lincoln's?" his brother said, juggling a hot bottle. "Why, he looks awful. Especially now."

The door opened and they saw the head of the walnut bedstead, past the crowding men, and saw the untrammelled, dusty black hair, the imperturbable cheekbones and nose of the fallen man. Someone took the hot bottles and handed out an armful of cold ones. The brothers took them and downstairs they went again, the cold of Lincoln's immortal dying against their hands.

"I'll never forgive myself," the portrait painter said. "Never if I live a thousand years."

"Pooh," said his brother. "Mr. Lincoln would lots rather have these bottles of hot water than have you daubing away at a picture."

"It's his last night on earth. Nobody will ever have the chance again."

"Well, he's had his daguerreotype took," his brother said, "and that's just as good. Better. In fact, I bet if he's had his picture took once he's had it took fifty times, so what you hollering about?"

"I'm hollering—" the artist began, and gave up. "I might as well not waste my breath," he said. "But a daguerreotype and a portrait—they're two different things."

"There is a draft from somewhere, Robert," Mrs. Lincoln said piteously. "I'm so cold. My neck hurts. My back hurts. I'm so tired." Her pale lips trembled. Her eyes were red rimmed with her long, fretful weeping that sometimes broke out in a kind of howl that turned Robert's neck red. Sometimes Robert supported her and led her into the far bedroom where the important men shifted their chairs back a few inches for her, or stepped back themselves upon their glossy boots if they were wearily standing, and she tried to throw herself upon her unconscious husband, her eyes streaming, loud wails bursting from her lips.

"Keep that everlasting woman out of here," Stanton cried once, when Robert had led her back to the parlor. "Keep her out!"

He could hear her in the front parlor as he wrote out his frenzied appeals (Grant, bring the Army! Soldiers, put down revolt! Stop the attack! Save the government! Save the Capitol! Save the Cabinet! Save me! Guard the prisoners! Man the guns! Watch the ramparts! Bar the gates! Keep out the enemy! Find the assassin!) in the



next room. "That everlasting woman," he muttered angrily, issuing dispatches about the President's condition. . . .

"Robert, Robert, I am so cold, so miserable, my legs ache, my head aches—"

"It will soon be over, Mother."

"Don't say that!" She buries her face in her handkerchief and cries loudly. (Maybe he will hear?)

"I mean, maybe they will let us move him and we can take him home soon. Maybe by daylight."

"It's daylight now, nearly. There's a draft from *somewhere*, Robert. Oh, law, oh, law, this night, this night!"

Stanton wrote that Lincoln was breathing his last, and when he went back into the bedroom it was true, or nearly true. A clock somewhere struck seven, "reluctant" morning began to steal through the cracks of the blinds and lace curtains, making the live, unshaven faces sickly white, making the dying face the tint of yellow against the blood-spattered white towel over the white pillowcase. The eyes looked black and blue clear down over the cheekbones.

Dr. Ezra W. Abbott added to the meticulous minutes he had been keeping all night: "Seven o'clock. Symptoms of immediate dissolution." The clock struck, and a young and earnest doctor held up his finger as though to say *hark*.

But it was not yet, and they waited. They waited twenty-two minutes and then was the time.

Stanton got to his feet. Like bantam Napoleon crowning himself, he clapped his hat upon his head. Then, recollecting, he took it off and laid it over his heart. It was an ill-thought, unbecoming gesture, but the words he spoke made up for it, for more, for everything. "Now he belongs to the ages," he said, not whispering.

Don't be afraid of him because he is a dead man the color of death. Upon the wrinkles in the sheet he is laid out with his hands folded and silver half dollars upon his eyes to keep them from opening.

All can go boldly into the house, down the long, narrow hall past the steep staircase and into that small back bedroom and look at him. He will not mind.

They're leaving now. They brought Mrs. Lincoln in to see him and she howled one last time, but not loudly, for she was very weary. Robert saw at a glance that it was as entirely public a death as it had been a dying, and bit his lips.

More than one stomach thought of history and immortality as no commodities to compare with coffee, buckwheat cakes and fine tobacco.

Upon the words that settle in Mrs. Peterson's now-stale house like dust, all may come in and tread, for the house is emptying. They are leaving to go into the drizzle of rain outside. "That dreadful house! That dreadful house!" Mrs. Lincoln says when they open the door for her upon day and chill air, and she looks across the street and sees by gray light of it the theater. "Stained . . . with the lifeblood of the nation," it stands, as guilty as the next one, dumfounded in guilt.

It signifies little to have missed the prayer of the pastor who dropped down upon his knees beside the bed and clasped his hands and bowed his head. The Quartermaster is going to send over half a dozen scared and solemn men to take the corpse out of this place, but there is time, before they appear. . . . No, he is not entirely alone, for there are two or three men, one sitting, one standing by the bureau, one idly lifting the curtain and looking out—and we are there.

Well, sir:

You never have to "open shop" in the morning at nine o'clock sharp. That's over!

You never have to wonder when to use the semicolon. It's used now, once and for all.

No more shad and strawberries or broke branches of blossom in spring, but no more cold feet and cold hands in bitter January, either, or soaking sweat through tiresome black broadcloth and thick, starched linen in Washington July and August.

No constellations upon the eye or tunes of "Bluetailed Fly," of "Blue Juniata" within the ear, but no sight of running blood or shot boys' running tears, either, nor vision of their dead meandering hair, their pebble eyes upon the dull, wet ground of battlefields. Upon war for the preservation of a homeland called Union the wry

mind need no more look, nor on the many-colored hands and faces of black, plum, coffee, bisque. . . .

"Ben, Ben Butler, listen," Lincoln said. "I have been thinking. Maybe the Negroes and the white people are going to take a notion to fight each other sometime. Nothing like *that* would ever have been seen before, nothing so violent and terrible. I've been thinking. Couldn't the blacks be shipped to Liberia or to South America and organized into communities so they could support themselves? Wouldn't they be far happier and flourish? You figure out how it could be done, will you, Ben?"

Ben Butler, with a face like a chuck-wagon cook, figured out how it couldn't be done instead. "Why, my God," he came and said, "they'd have to have the air space the law provides for emigrants, wouldn't they? herded together in the hold like a bunch of cattle?"

"Oh, they'd have to have the air space," Lincoln said.

"Well, my God, then," Ben Butler said. "I've got the figures here, I've made tables—" Lincoln reached out and took them and set his glasses on his nose. "They would propagate faster, Negro babies would be born faster, than all the naval and merchant vessels we own could carry them from the country!"

Lincoln studied the paper, frowning. Then he looked up and sighed. "Your deductions seem to be correct," he said. "But what in the name of the Almighty can we do?"

That's no concern of yours now, man. No concern at all.

That "amiable weakness" of yours for wanting to stand back to back and measure with other tall men! You have measured with them all now, and not one is taller, nobody is taller in the land than you.

By dear! by jing! your favorite expressions will fall into disuse like Jute words lost long ago.

Your last laughter, neigh of wild horse, shrill and hearty whinny, nine hours old, will be nine hundred years old and older, and forgotten as the laugh of the Curetes.

We shook your right hand so often you thought it was going to drop off sometimes, and it ached like toothache, clear up to the elbow, the shoulder even. But we want to shake a man's hand, we want to say we shook a great man's hand when we had the chance,

tell our children and grandchildren. This is "the *sine qua non* of American good will and respect," so we shook your hand plenty of times.

Nobody feared you. Sometimes, it would have been better if a few people, not to name any names, had feared you, but how could they, you with that "grotesquely attenuated figure" of yours, wrapping your long legs around each other to get rid of them when sitting, wrapping your long arms around your body when standing, stooping so all could look up in your "mournful yellow face" and see the light, warm eyes shining down upon them?

You didn't fear anybody, either, not your sweet-smiling enemies in high and low places, or the madmen who wrote you letter after obscene letter you carefully saved beneath the large-lettered word: ASSASSINATION. For they were threats of death. You minded at first that anybody—that so many—should want to kill you, but then you said, "I got used to it finally. There is nothing like getting used to things."

There isn't, is there?

They said it to you often enough! "How's the weather up there?" You always laughed and gave some answer.

How is it, Mr. Lincoln? How's the weather up there upon the highest pedestal in the nation?

---

## IV

*"I hoped for no gain."*

—BOOTH'S DIARY

---

WHEN Dr. Mudd opened the door it was not light enough for him to see more than that a boy stood upon the stoop, and that one of the two horses near the steps bore a rider. "What do you want?" he asked.

"He fell off his horse," the boy said. "My friend here. His ankle's broke. Could you set it, do you think, Doctor? Are you Dr. Mudd? We're on our way down south. It hurts him like fury. We can pay you for it. He's got money to pay."

"Well, of course I'll do what I can," Dr. Mudd said. "Bring him in—down this hall and in the first door to the left, to the parlor. Put him on the lounge there. I'll go get some more clothes on, and what I'll need."

"All right," the boy said, and suddenly it was light enough for the doctor to see what a winning smile he had, though his jaw receded a little too much, and what a fresh pair of eyes, and that he had never begun to shave the fuzz off his pink cheeks.

Dr. Mudd smiled back, before he turned and hurried down the long hall, saying again over his shoulder, "Bring him in and put him on the lounge in the parlor."

It has been boldly written like words cut into bronze, and sworn upon a stack of Bibles as high as the Washington Monument, that Dr. Mudd did not know the man on the lounge in his parlor. That he did not recognize the handsome young man's milk-white face, his black mustache, black eyebrows, black eyelashes half an inch long and his curling black hair. That he did not recall those eyes



with pupils so big their hazel color was pushed to an edge, a rim, nothing, leaving black eyes of Spaniard or Italian.

And perhaps he did not.

But Johnny, lying there shivering in his spruce black broadcloth coat, knew Dr. Mudd. Because he had been down into Maryland on business twice—once five months before, and once three months before, and both times he had slept under this same roof.

Dr. Mudd, at the terrible military trial which lasted the coming summer from May 11th to June 30th when the commission found all guilty as accused, swore up and down that he did not know Johnny that early dawn of April 15th, did not recognize one feature of that extraordinary face.

Questioned over and over again, in tears, Mrs. Mudd swore up and down that *she* did not recognize one feature either. Cornered, hysterical, she said he had a shawl drawn halfway up over his pale, sick face. And he wore false black whiskers! She insisted upon it.

The Mudds did not know him from Adam, they said.

The terrible military commission, who believed nobody and nothing, believed them. Perhaps they half believed them. Anyway, Dr. Mudd was not sentenced to climb up on the gallows and be hanged but instead was sentenced to life in prison on the Dry Tortugas where he stayed four years, and then, because of great heroism in a yellow fever epidemic, was turned loose and sent home.

If the terrible military commission half believed the Mudds, it may be that they told the truth, and did not know Johnny when he came to their house with David Herold to get his broken ankle set and be put to bed and sleep seven hours.

To give them the benefit of the doubt, this is a perfectly silent scene. The performers do this and that, their lips move as they speak to one another, but all is as still as though enacted under water.

The scene is the parlor, papered with mustard and white, white curtains hanging clear to the floor, a flowered carpet, too many wide-framed pictures, too many *bibelots*, a book called *The English Poets* that only a strong man could pack around, a book of engravings a strong man would stagger under, several handsome and extraordinarily unaccommodating chairs, a round table under a fringed, plum velvet cloth, a hard and narrow lounge.

The early dawn light comes in under the half-drawn blinds with no feel of sun behind it, fitful like the spirit without the body, for it comes down a cloudy path through promised rain. Dr. Mudd has lighted the round-globed kerosene lamp, but through the thickly painted purple grapes, green leaves and ripe red roses on the shade not much illumination can come. Mrs. Mudd has brought a smaller, brighter lamp, but the daylight, though so frail, is enough to shame its brisk gleam into ineffectiveness, as an old practiced beauty may sometimes put a young belle in the shade.

It is too late to see the exchange of greetings between these four people. Right now, Dr. Mudd is slitting Johnny's left riding boot up the side, drawing it gently off the swollen foot and ankle while Johnny winces and bites his lip. It is an expensive, custom-made boot of fine leather and Dr. Mudd does not see when he drops it carelessly that inside the lining close to the top, in ink, it says J. WILKES. That fatal boot, left in the house when Johnny goes off the next day on crutches, wearing the makeshift old shoe that takes its place, will nearly hang Dr. Mudd, nearly ruin his life, but it has no significance now. He merely takes it off and drops it on the floor.

David Herold sits gingerly on the edge of one of the straight chairs and watches the proceedings earnestly, observing how pale Johnny is, though he always was pale. In fact, he is as white as a ghost. In marble he is still more splendid, when, his luxuriance of texture and tint secondary, his pure lines are drawn before the eyes. Mrs. Mudd notes them, holding the lamp high for her husband, and looks quickly away as befits the well-bred and guiltless young matron.

With gentle fingers Dr. Mudd sets the broken bone, saying a word now and then. Johnny's lips move. He talks a good deal but seems too tired to gesture much as he is wont to do. He smiles once, sunnily, when he fumbles for his handkerchief and wipes the beads of perspiration off his forehead. Dr. Mudd makes a nice, neat job of it, putting on splints from an old bandbox, and bandaging the limb expertly. Then Mrs. Mudd says something and her husband nods and turns to David. David gets up quickly, with a broad

smile, comes over and stoops down to let Johnny reach up and put an arm around his neck so that he may rise.

Mrs. Mudd goes before and Johnny, helped on one side by David and on the other side by Dr. Mudd, follows after, out into the hall. Johnny automatically glances into the familiar mirror as he goes past, sees that the man they are half carrying, ill and worn out though he looks, yet has grace and a kind of radiance, as though his flesh gives off light. It satisfies him, that glimpse of his own curl-shadowed face and form, as though he had taken a photograph of a much-loved absent sweetheart out of his waistcoat pocket and gazed on it, and then put it back, comforted by the sight of it.

The woman, with the three men a few steps behind her, goes up the steep staircase, down the upstairs hall. She opens wide the door into the bedroom directly over the parlor. It is furnished with two beds, a pair of chairs and little else. She turns down the bedcovers and goes out, stopping at the door to turn and say something—possibly good night, sleep well—to her guests and to make a remark to her husband. While he answers she takes the chimney off the lamp and blows the flame out. She sets it back on and leaves with it, carrying it high and carefully as though it were still shedding light upon the darkness and broad daylight had not come. It has, such as it is (in Washington the assassin's victim has two hours of dim morning to die in), and Dr. Mudd, after he and David have got Johnny undressed and in bed, goes over and pulls the green blinds down, first at one window and then at another, but even when they are down, it is light enough to see in the room. David is getting out of his clothes, hugging himself now and again to show how cold he is and how glad he's going to be to get under the covers.

Dr. Mudd says something and prepares to leave. He has got to the door when Johnny lifts himself up on one elbow and beckons him back, reaching out for his coat over the back of the chair near by and fumbling in the pockets. Dr. Mudd raises his pink eyebrows when Johnny offers him some greenbacks. He shakes his head, oh, my, no, but when Johnny speaks with a flush to his cheeks, and David good-humoredly joins him in his petition, the doctor finally puts his hand out and receives the money. But unwillingly, for he

makes a gesture as though he must return it, but Johnny will not allow it—not for a moment. He has paid twenty-five dollars to have his broken bone set and glad to do it. He smiles as he speaks.

At the door Dr. Mudd adds another word, lifting his finger as though to caution the invalid, but Johnny's heavy lashes have come to rest on the white cheeks and he would seem to have fallen asleep. So Dr. Mudd addresses David, who, from the soft pillows, half sits up so he can nod his head politely, smothering a gigantic yawn with a soiled and boyish hand. He goes out then, shutting the door behind him. David sinks back down into the pillows with a look across the room at Johnny's quiet black head, and . . . the fugitives sleep.

Not until April 26th, on that farmhouse porch over in Virginia, in his own blood, under the red rays of the rising sun, does Johnny sleep so well again. His right hand lies under his cheek. He breathes deeply and evenly, too tired even to dream.

At the Mudd home Johnny was able to get treatment for his broken leg, but his stomach was too squeamish to eat the delicious breakfast and lunch which were carried to him. He thought it might have been because he had drunk so much the whole week and especially the day and night before. He would have swallowed a little brandy but they had only whisky in the house and he declined that. Mrs. Mudd also let cheerful David carry up hot water and a razor so Johnny could shave. He shaved his mustache off. It was thought this would make quite a change in his appearance but it did not seem to do so, except to make him look younger, tenderer, thinner, and quite a lot more ill. They let him have a good long on-and-off sleep—seven hours—in a good bed, with plenty of covers.

Whatever transpired that wordless day in legend, Johnny and David had to go on their way. The Mudds did not, would not or could not allow them to stay. Johnny would have given ten of the remaining years of the life, the long life, the golden life, he thought he had coming, to have had a safe hole to crouch in when the hounds went over. The Mudds' isolated farmhouse would have been just the spot for him, but no. Here's your hat what's your



hurry, Johnny, and the fugitives had to be on their way.

David tried to hire a carriage but there was none to be had. While Johnny dozed in the upstairs bedroom, he went with Dr. Mudd over to Dr. Mudd's father's house. But old Mr. Mudd would not let his carriage go. Tomorrow was Easter and the ladies would need it for church. All the ladies in the neighborhood would need their carriages for church on Easter Sunday.

So Johnny couldn't ride away in a carriage. He had to go on horseback again. While David got the horses he hobbled down a lane back of the Mudds' house, with a pair of crutches the old English gardener had made that morning—two long sticks with a little crossbar on top to fit uncomfortably under his armpits—and when David caught up with him he mounted—with great difficulty, it almost seemed as if it couldn't be done, it was such a hardship—the roan horse. David got on the bay horse, the little bitch, the rocker, and off they went into Zachiah Swamp, Johnny sweating and thinking to himself the dizziness would pass, the nausea, the faintness, and he would be all right. He had to be all right. He had to.

Sounds again, now . . . the horses clop-clopping through the mud, the creak of saddle leather, a jingle, a jangle, wind blowing in the branches, Johnny's deep-drawn sigh . . . even such a small noise as the drip of long-fallen raindrops that only now slide off the last edge of stiff, early leaves and vanish in the soggy meadow. . . .

David said cheerfully, "And he told me the shortest way to the river was across this swamp. It's called Zachiah Swamp. If you get worse we're supposed to go see a doctor named Dr. Stewart over in Virginia—when we get over there—he's a rebel and a good doctor and a rich man and we're supposed to go see him—he's got a big farm, it's his summer place. We're supposed to go there if you get worse."

"We might as well stop off there anyway when we get to it," Johnny said. "Even if I don't. And I don't see why I should. My leg's been set—even if it hurts like the very old devil. It will heal. Why shouldn't it? I'm not going to get worse."

"You sure look bad, Johnny," David said. "Like you been pulled through a knothole."

"How far did he say it was to this Samuel Cox's?" Johnny asked.



"He says fifteen miles straight across this swamp. He says we won't have a bit of trouble. We can't miss the place. And from there it's hardly any ways a-tall to the river. And there's where we can get across."

"Who is this Cox supposed to be?"

"Well, he's a rebel, too. We can stay there all night tonight. He's got a big place called Rich Hill."

"We'd ought to make it by suppertime." Johnny shifted painfully in the saddle, dug his watch out of his vest pocket and looked at it. It was four o'clock straight up. He put the watch back, and went to make the familiar, automatic gesture of curling the ends of his mustache upward under his thumb and forefinger, but the mustache was gone. It gave him a slight shock for an instant and he wondered what Ella would say. (Ella wouldn't say anything. She had tried to kill herself with chloroform that morning when she heard the news that Johnny had killed the President and was gone. At the moment she was in bed in her sister's cozy brothel, only partly conscious, so whether Johnny had a mustache or whether he didn't—once a matter of great import—wouldn't signify much to Ella now.) He wondered what Bessie would say, too, and Asia, most especially her.

"Are you sure you know where you're headed, David?"

"Sure, I'm sure. He says just right straight across this swamp, and we can't miss it. Fifteen miles. Right straight across."

"Yes, but how do you know we're going straight?"

"Oh, we're going straight all right. How you feeling, Johnny?"

"Not so bad."

"Leg hurt terrible?"

"Not so bad. I'm cold, though. Hot one minute and cold the next. I suppose it will rain. . . ."

They both glanced upward through interlacing branches adorned with new green at the sky that floated like layers of dirty tulle above their heads, colorless, cool. The whining wind, having rooted and rolled in rain somewhere farther off, smelled of it.

"Oh, I don't think it's going to rain," David said reassuringly. "Anyway, when it does, me and you will be in out of it."

"I hope so," Johnny said, with a sigh.

It was easy enough to set out "straight across" Zachiah Swamp, harder to hold the course on horseback over a nonexistent path on wet, spongy ground saturated with water. Thickly growing vines, bushes, trees and grasses sprang from below, above and on all sides like the anxious grove a sick slumberer might lose his way in, in perplexing dream. It grew darker and darker. The rain began too, or only half began, falling and not falling, the drops far between but large and cold, striking with little spats of sound on leaves of taffeta and on the horses' bright rumps and on the two heads hunched between the discouraged shoulders of the riders. Johnny had lost his handsome slouch hat on the stage of Ford's Theater, but he had a little plaid woolen shawl and this he wrapped about his head and neck like an old woman. The horses went timidly, slow as grief, and the later, colder, darker it became, the more restless and irritable Johnny grew. His nausea was gone and he felt a faint stir of hunger for food, but this could not match his all-gone longing for a drink of brandy. He could not smoke his pipe as, too late, it was discovered that neither of them had any matches. Long sitting upon the horse had caused his injured ankle and leg to throb like toothache. "My luck—my damn luck—" he kept muttering.

"What's that, Johnny?" David asked.

"This swamp," Johnny fumed. "We've been in it for hours. How do we know we're cutting straight across? Maybe we're going in a circle. Maybe we'll land right back at Dr. Mudd's. Now, he'd like that, wouldn't he? She'd like it, too, wouldn't she? They'd be tickled pink, wouldn't they? I can just see them!"

"Johnny," David said, interrupting him, "it seems to me we're on a kind of a road now. Don't it seem like it to you?"

The rain had stopped but the leaves kept letting go of drops, so that the wayfarers thought it was still showering. Moonlight from a nowhere-to-be-seen moon and a bright star or two shining down in streaks through the gloom showed more a faint clearing than anything resembling a road, and Johnny, looking down, said, "If it is a road—suppose it is—where the hell does it lead to? Besides, it isn't a road. It's just a sort of a cleared space." Gloomily he felt again in the old way for the mustache that was not there, gnawing his full

lower lip with an old, willful petulance that had sent women to their knees to ask how they might please and make him smile again.

With one accord the two reined up their horses. David dismounted and came over close to Johnny. A stray moonbeam lighted for an instant a string of raindrops in his hair and lighted his eyes like a spaniel's, but it vanished and the lights went out. "Listen, Johnny," he said, "what do you say I help you down and you find a dry place on the ground and wait here, and I'll go on ahead and try to find out something."

"A dry place!" Johnny said. "In this mudhole? And how do you know where I am? How could you come back here when you don't know where I am, and don't know where you are yourself, for that matter? And what could you find out except that we're at the end of nowhere? Oh, this damn leg of mine!" he added in a fury. "We'd have been in Richmond long ago. We'd have had supper and be in bed. A bath, maybe. God!"

"Yes, but maybe—" David stopped short, listening. "Johnny," he said in a whisper. "I hear somebody. Don't you hear somebody?" He reached up and got his carbine off the saddle.

Johnny, his pistol already in his hand, was listening, too, above the dismal croak of frogs. He had pulled the shawl down off his head. The roan snorted, and new-learned fright found the circuit it was to travel over and over within Johnny while he lived. He leaned forward and patted the roan's neck. No sound came but his lips said, "Easy, girl, easy."

"Listen, Johnny."

"I'm listening—"

"It's somebody singing—"

"Yes—"

"Johnny, I'm going to find out who it is. You stay here," David whispered. "I'll be back in a minute." He set off, leading the little bay, and their two ghosts faded away in the darkness.

The singer was a Negro named Oswald Swan, a young man who lived all by himself in Zachiah Swamp, in a cabin not far from the dim clearing the two fugitives had perceived. He had gone outside the cabin door to relieve himself, and while about it had foolishly sung his favorite, indeed almost his only, song, "De Peacock He

Can't Fly Away," to keep back the dark. It brought David to him as the moth to the flame, and brought troubles and aggravations enough, as he told afterward, to divide between *three* men and then each man have a load bigger than he could carry in a lifetime. Why, a few days there in Washington, when they threatened him and questioned him and worried at him like a cat with a mouse, he didn't think he'd ever see home again, or Christmas again, or even the dawn of the next day . . . and all because he couldn't go outside his door and do his business without hollering his head off and singing "De Peacock He Can't Fly Away." Of course, that taught him a lesson. There was never a peep out of him again that anybody ever heard of. Years later, when he quietly—oh, how quietly—assayed once more to sing the old song, de peacock could not fly away indeed, for all his pretty story had passed from memory and could not be recalled.

Oswald Swan said, in his soft dialect, that there wasn't anything at the time to make a man uneasy. He had been back in the house maybe three or four minutes when the gentle knock came at the door. He took his lighted candle with him when he opened it. There was just this young man, "more like a chile, he was, about seventeen, eighteen, awful sweet smile to his face. Not a mean-looking boy a-tall. Wet as sop. Polite like. 'We've lost our way,' he says. 'Me and my friend.' 'Where you going?' I says. 'To a man named Colonel Cox,' he says, 'to a place called Rich Hill.' 'I knows where that is,' I says. 'Are we on the right track then?' he says. 'You're on the right track,' I says, 'but you got quite a piece to go. It's nine miles or better.' 'Well, how do we get there?' he says. 'Well,' I says, 'I'll tell you,' so I tells him, but he says, 'It's so everlasting dark,' he says, 'I don't think we could find nothing in this dreadful swamp.' 'I ain't got no bed to speak of,' I says, 'but if you want to roost here till daylight—?' 'No,' he says, 'we got to go on. We got to go on to Rich Hill tonight.' 'You friends of Colonel Cox's?' I says. 'Yes,' he says. He looks at me worried-like. 'Can't you go with us?' he says. 'Can't you show us the way?' 'Well,' I says, knowing it ain't a night nobody would want to be stomping around in the mud and the rain when they had a chance to stay home and keep warm. 'Listen,' he says, 'my friend will pay you



well for it. It ain't we want you to do it for nothing.' Naturally that threw a little different light on the subject," Oswald Swan used to say, "so the first thing you know I had myself done up ready to go with this boy. He wasn't no mean-looking fellow. More like a chile. He says they was hungry so I took along a little something to eat, a little corn pone is all, and a bite of ham or two, but it was all I had and they was glad to get it. Even the proud one on the horse was glad to get it," he said. "He gobbled it down like he ain't et for a week. He would of paid well for brandy but I didn't have none of that. I didn't have nothing. . . . He didn't hardly say boo," Oswald Swan used to say, "all the way over to Colonel Cox's. It took us quite a while. He just sat up there on his horse like somebody wore out, humped all over, but every once in a while it seemed like he would think of something and this would make him straighten right up like maybe he was Beauregard or somebody proud like that, but then he'd forget what it was he was thinking about and then he'd hump right back down again like somebody sick or all wore out. He stayed on his horse all the time, he never once got down. But this other one, this boy, he'd be on his horse one minute and down walking along beside me the next. He ask me if I wouldn't care to ride a ways but I said I wasn't no hand with a horse. Once I sort of whispers to him, 'Is he sick?' and he whispers back, 'He ain't sick exactly. He's got a broken leg. His ankle's broke,' he says. 'How'd he break it?' I says. 'Fall down?' 'Jumped,' he says. 'He made a big long jump.' 'He'd better not of made it,' I says. 'It kind of looks that way,' he says." Oswald Swan often told the whole story.

It was nearly four o'clock in the morning when Johnny, half dead with fatigue and in pain, and David, going along like a sleep-walker, with the Negro in the lead, reached Rich Hill, Colonel Cox's estate. In the last wash of greenish moonlight before dawn, it was a place to warm the heart, though no lights showed in any of the many windows, except a flickering one in the Negro quarters out in back where a dark young mother saw to a crying child. They could hear his wail, and hear it stop when she must have taken him in her arms.

Johnny, with a great sigh of weariness, took a ten-dollar bill out



of his purse and gave it to Oswald Swan. "Thank you for bringing us over," he said.

"Oh, that's all right," Oswald said, pocketing the money.

"Next time we get lost in Zachiah Swamp we'll call on you again," David said. He was off his horse again and close by Johnny, to speak with him when the Negro had gone.

"Oh, that's all right," the black man repeated. "Wasn't no trouble." When he started down the road he saw that the two were talking earnestly together. Just before he got out of sight he heard loud rapping on the front door. Glancing back he saw the drooping figure of the "proud one" still upon the horse, while the one who seemed "more like a chile" tried to raise somebody in the dark house.

---

# V

*"O Oum-Aur, you have prevented me from the cup when it should have been moving to the right; and yet the one of us Three that you would not serve is not the least worthy."*

Pour Us Wine: IBN KOLTHUM

---

COLONEL COX was a wealthy man. His farm, Rich Hill, was large and fertile, with beautiful woodland surrounding it like the thick frame around an old-fashioned picture. The many outbuildings behind the house—a barn, summer kitchen, milk house and the several small dwellings of numerous slaves—gave it the look of a hamlet. The house itself was handsome, with capacious chimneys, bright paint and glittering windows, an agreeable place, promising to be full of soft beds, soft chairs, good food, good drink, and sights to please the eye as well, a Reynolds or a Hogarth, and well-bound books. Here must dwell a man of true hospitality, it seemed.

Rich Hill's master was an avowed rebel. Though not young, he had captained a volunteer company throughout the war, his headquarters being at Bryantown where he became well acquainted with the Mudd family. He was a hot-headed, well-born man of haughty presence, with a long chin and a thin mouth. When David's loud knock (he began softly, as was his way, to show he was sorry to have to do it, and wound up by thundering upon the panel when it occurred to him maybe nobody was home) disturbed his haughty sleep, he roused, not with curiosity or concern, but in a blaze of anger. He was out of bed and across the room and had the window open and his head out in an instant. "What in God's name do you think you're doing down there?" he shouted. "Tearing the house down?"

Johnny, on his horse, put his comb away. He hooked a finger over his cravat, straightening it. His pale face reddened. He sat up as tall as he could. David walked half the length of the pillared porch and hurried down the steps and out onto the grass where he could look up at the irate man in the window.

"We're friends, sir," he said.

Johnny sat silent, watching him.

"Well, what in God's name do you think you're doing?"

"Could you—could you give us a bed?" David asked, clearing his throat.

Now Johnny spoke out, declaimed, rather, in the grand authoritative manner of the Shakespearean actor, with volume and purity: "If you will do me the honor of allowing me to speak with you," he called, "I will inform you what our business is and has been, and what favor we are necessitated by unfortunate circumstance to ask of a gentleman like yourself. We have come from Dr. Samuel Mudd's home in Bryantown, and have ridden most of the night. We are in need of food and shelter."

Instantly the head was drawn in, the window closed, the light of a lamp became visible, and shortly afterward the front door swung open. Colonel Cox stood in the doorway and watched, while David helped Johnny off his horse, and then assisted him to the steps. He let him painfully go up them himself, however, inexpertly using his crutches, while he, David, at a word from Johnny, went back to tie the horses to the fence.

Colonel Cox looked at him searchingly as he struggled to the door. "Are you a wounded soldier?" he asked.

"I am John Wilkes Booth."

Colonel Cox opened his mouth, closed it. He stepped back and with a beckon invited him in, also David, who had now come up the stairs and was behind him. Johnny hobbled in, so stiff necked and straight backed that he seemed not to be hobbling at all but striding. "I heard the news," the Colonel said. "About Lincoln. We heard it yesterday morning."

"We badly need shelter and food." Johnny held out his left hand, the palm down, to show on the back of it the childishly formed, faded letters J.W.B. tattooed upon it in India ink, as though it

had been a brevet, a ticket of leave, saying *let this man pass*.

Colonel Cox gazed at him curiously, "There is no possibility whatever for you to remain here," he said. "You must go on. You can't stay here." There was no welcome, no friendliness, no admiration in his eyes.

Johnny got paler. "Where shall we go?" he asked.

"Well, my God, man, you must know where you're going. You didn't kill the President and then make a beeline straight for Rich Hill and think you were going to stay here, did you? You must be on your way *somewhere*."

"We are going to Richmond," Johnny said through bluish lips. Observing his look of sudden sickness, the Colonel went across the room to the heavy walnut sideboard and filled two crystal glasses with honey-brown liquid from a cut glass bottle, handing one to Johnny and one to David.

"You do not drink with us," Johnny said. The Colonel made a little motion with his hand that meant he did not choose to avail himself of the honor.

"The devil take the hindmost, huh, Johnny?" David's light voice sounded unnaturally heavy in the humiliating silence. He went to drink up bravely but there was too much fire in the liquor for his young throat and he gave an explosive cough which brought a blush that threatened to burn him to the ground.

Colonel Cox had pushed a chair up for Johnny and indicated one that David, whose noise and confusion he ignored, might take. Then, his cold eyes on the injured man, he sat down himself. "Now," he said, "let's hear what you've got to say."

"Say?" Johnny took a sip of brandy like a man replete with dinner and wines, and took another quiet sip. Only his trembling hand betrayed him. He could have drunk half the heavy bottle on the sideboard in one long gulp, and more, he could have swallowed all the brandy in Maryland; yet in pride and fury he drank his liquor like a disdainful and overly mannered connoisseur. "Say? Only that an assassination was eminently in order. I took it upon my humble self to perform the deed."

"You took it upon yourself to play the devil," the Colonel said.

David looked anxiously at Johnny, who took another mannered

sip of brandy, who shrugged his shoulders, whose eyelids narrowed upon his glittering eyes.

"This ain't so bad, Johnny," David said with forced good humor. "At least, we got blankets, so we won't be cold, and he give us some brandy. Of course, we can't build no fire in this grove in case somebody sees the smoke, like Colonel Cox says. But he'll send us something to eat, and see we get a rowboat to get across the river in when the coast gets clear, and—and this is a *safe* place anyway. Nobody couldn't find nobody in woods like these." He glanced over at his companion, who, lying flat, wrapped in a worn blanket, was gazing stonily upward at a patch of cold morning sky. "You ain't said a word, Johnny. . . . It's true what he said. It stands to reason, we couldn't stay in the house with all them niggers swarming all over the place. They'd be sure to blab. The niggers want you to get caught, of course, all the niggers do, that's the worst of it. They loved Mr. Linc—him, you know. They couldn't blab fast enough. Besides, now it's different, with all them thousands of soldiers and detectives everywhere, looking all over hell for you, and then all that money for a reward. It's different now, Johnny."

Johnny still gazed upward, not blinking.

"See—we ain't seen no newspapers, Johnny. Glory, I didn't think there'd be all that *hullabaloo*, did you? It didn't hardly seem like it would cause all that stir like it has, did it? Just the President shot. The way Colonel Cox talks, you'd think you blew up Washington or New York City or something." He lapsed into silence but the coldness of the damp ground penetrating his thin blanket and light clothing, the hardness of it, the wetness of the foliage, were not tickets to instant slumber and so he spoke again. "It's Easter Sunday, Johnny." He too looked upward at the gray sky and then back at his companion, turning his head to see him better. "Hell of a poor day for it," he said.

Now Johnny opened his lips but it was a moment before he spoke, as though he were going to say something in a foreign language he had only just learned. "Hell of a poor day for what?" he said.

"Easter. The girls'll be mad as hops if it rains. They've every last



one got a new dress. Ma'll be mad, too. She's got a new hat. Looks like a birthday cake."

Johnny shut his eyes, turned his head back and forth and shifted a few inches to the right, trying to ease his weary body. His leg bothered him and he was so cold his teeth chattered, yet he was hot at the same time. His cold face had the sensation of burning. "Why don't you go on to sleep, David?" he said.

"Well, this ain't no feather bed. It takes a while." He shifted, too. "Johnny?"

"What?"

"Ain't it a hell of a note?"

"What?"

"Well, the rebels. Didn't you imagine they'd treat us nicer? Wouldn't a person imagine? Here they was supposed to be so anxious to get rid of—of the President, and here they don't act glad a-tall, just mad, like they'd been done some harm instead of a favor, and here you jumped down twenty feet and broke your leg and all that, and they won't hardly do *nothing* for us! And here Colonel Cox says the war was over and everything was fine till you come along and practically started it all over again, and says that nobody, neither rebels nor Union, is ever going to thank you for it. Now ain't that a fine thing for a man to come out bald faced and say? I'm glad you stood right up to him like you did and showed him where to head in at."

Johnny laughed bitterly.

"But I'm glad you didn't just say c'mon, and go out, and me and you ride off his place entirely, like I was afraid you was going to do. I was glad when he offered to let us lay out here in this here grove of his, that you said you would, and took the blankets and brandy he give us."

"What else could we do?" Johnny said. "If the whole Federal army is after us the way he says, all over Maryland and Virginia, and all the detectives from New York and every place else, we'd be a pretty spectacle riding down a public road in broad daylight, wouldn't we? And how would we get across the Potomac? Gunboats all up and down it wherever you look, he says. We've got to watch our chance."

"Be blamed if I thought it would cause such a *stir*," David said,

with deep admiration in his voice. "A hundred thousand dollars reward! Or was it two hundred thousand? I thought it would be wrote up in the papers and all like that, but I didn't think it would cause—"

"So what could we do," Johnny went on as though David had not spoken, "only to accept his *kind invitation* to lie out here on the wet, cold ground, in woods where I doubt the sun will ever shine, without the privilege to build a fire to take the chill out of our bones, without any hot food—"

"We got to watch our chance, all right. But glory, Johnny, what if he don't send somebody? What if he don't see to it we get a boat?"

"Oh, he'll see to it all right. He can't get us off his place fast enough."

David was growing so sleepy now that he hardly heard the last words. He drew his knees up to his chin, doubling his arm under his head. "Just the same, I'm surprised at the rebels," he said drowsily. "I sure thought they'd be nicer to us than—they—been—"

Johnny, half sitting now, sleep far away, leaning on his elbow with his chin in his palm, looked down on his young companion. "You could get away," he said softly. "Why don't you go on and make it by yourself, David? I'm the one they're after."

David roused, having heard dimly what Johnny said. "They're after me, too, remember," he said with what pride he could muster in his muddleheadedness. "Colonel Cox said so. He said my name was in the papers as big as life and they was after me, too."

"Yes, but you didn't do anything. You could clear yourself."

"Why, glory, Johnny," David said, as though he was talking in his sleep, turning over and taking the same position on the left side, "with your leg broke and all, and the rebels acting so funny, you couldn't get along without *me*."

The actor looked at him. "Why should you do it, though, David?"

"Well . . . you've been so nice to me . . . and here you're a big actor and engaged to a senator's daughter . . . and you give me that nice gun and all them free passes to the shows . . . and you said . . . you know, when all this blows over . . . you said you was going to make an actor out of me and get me on the stage . . . and you

said . . . well, glory, Johnny, after all the nice things you done . . . and give me money . . . well, I couldn't go off and leave you in such a fix as this. . . . I couldn't, you know . . . not if I was to die for it. . . . But I sure am surprised at the rebels."

"I'm surprised, too," Johnny said. "David?"

"What, Johnny?" was long in coming and faint in sound.

"David, I wanted to tell you . . . I won't forget this, the way you've hung on. From now on I'm going to . . . going to try to hold up my end of the bargain better . . . not act like a sorehead all the time because things aren't going right." He moved his left leg a little and winced. "God damn it," he said softly.

At least he had matches now. Clumsily he filled his pipe and lit it, his face clearing as he puffed.

David slumbered peacefully, but Johnny went on talking as though he were still awake. "Grandfather used to say—what was it Grandfather used to say? What can't be cured must be endured. And Mother—Mother used to say—she always says—" The thought of her brought his hand before his eyes, shutting out the light, and in the darkness here was home again, sweet home so long unthought of and unremembered. Here was summer, here was Cola di Rienzi saddled and bridled and ready for a canter. Here was Asia, the beautiful, running down the steps with a book in her hands, saying Johnny, Johnny, wait till I get my kerchief and I'll go with you. . . .

---

## VI

*"My lad, how full of joy and woe  
Your mother bore you years ago  
Tonight to lie in the rain."*

—A. E. HOUSMAN

---

THE NAME of John Wilkes Booth does live in the history books, even today, as he would have wished, but his act has left it a poor thing. It is little, too, and his story has dwindled to a size that would have shamed him. Let's see, now, how does it go? He was an actor, wasn't he? His brother was also an actor—in fact, he had a couple of brothers who were actors. They were a theatrical family. And—? He killed Abraham Lincoln, shot him in the back of the head in Ford's Theater. He said something—oh, yes, *sic semper tyrannis*. He jumped down off the box and caught his spur in a flag and broke his leg, but he got away. They got him, though, later on. He was hiding in a barn or something—they tried to burn it down or something—but anyway, they shot him. Soldiers or somebody—anyway, he paid for his crime.

That his twenty-six years of passion and beauty, his torment, love, influence, overwhelming exploit and denouement could shrink to a paragraph, a sentence, a mere damaged patronymic in time and depiction, he would not have credited. How could he? As he lies here in the tangled thicket, a three-day-old assassin with an army after him, the largest price ever offered for a man in America set upon his head, with the added emphasis, the underlinement of sharp-pointed physical pain, he is to himself several times bigger than life. But then, he always was. Even when he falls asleep he is many times bigger than life, he feels so, he always felt so, his undecipherable nomadic dream bigger than an ocean. . . .

His bed is a hard one and he moves restlessly upon it, seeking warmth, comfort, in half slumber, that is not there. He will hide in this patch of woods for six long days—it won't rain all the time, the sun will shine, but not warmly enough through tree and vine to warm the moldy ground and thin the blood—without fire, he will be here for five long nights. Now, it is Easter Sunday at noon, and not bells of rejoicing but sorrier bells are tolling all through the land. In his repose he hears the midday puling of sparrow and cat-bird, but does not hear the bells. It will be next Friday night before he can sneak away by darkness and try to cross the river, the best part of a week before he can rise and go.

Let us look at him and consider him, shall we? Consider why John Wilkes Booth and no other is the man who killed Lincoln. Consider who he was and how and why he came to do this. Why he lies here upon the wet ground far from home (and will never reach home again). Does it not seem that something has set him apart for this special fate, for minimized death in immense life, and small life in exaggerated death? And who or what was it, do you think?

If anyone had asked him who or what it was, he would have been quick to say: *myself*. If anyone had asked, *And who are you?* he would have said: *Wilkes Booth*. (When he grew up and came to fashion and renown he tried to drop the John, the Johnny, but it clung, being a name that love could use. Love generally speaking it, he scarcely had another.) If anyone had questioned further: *And who is Wilkes Booth?* he would have been as perplexed as ourselves or Socrates. He would have had to stop and knit his brow and think, and no one knows what he would have answered.

Johnny was the ninth of ten children. His father was Junius Brutus Booth and his mother was a beautiful woman named Mary Ann Holmes. Their oldest son Junius was thirty years old and Johnny was thirteen years old when the couple got married. The reason they waited so long was that they couldn't get married before. Junius Brutus Booth was already married.

He was an Englishman who emigrated to America. The wife he left there was the mother of his small son, but he didn't love her. He left her because he wanted to live with his mistress instead, who



was for the first time pregnant. She was eighteen years old. The only way he could live with her was to leave England and go to a foreign land. He picked out America. So here they came across the ocean, he and his sweetheart, glorious Mary Ann, and a little horse named Peacock. They settled down in Maryland. Junius bought a farm twenty-five miles from Baltimore and three miles from the country town of Bel Air. It is still there, the town, and the farm, too.

Junius was a famous actor at the time. In fact, he was one of the most famous actors in the business. He could play Richard so that it lifted a man right out of his seat, and King Lear so that he tore the heart out of the breast, and Sir Edward Mortimer in *The Iron Chest* in a way to scare a person so he couldn't sleep for a week.

His father was a lawyer, named Richard Booth, and if there was anything in the world Richard Booth did not want his son to become, it was an actor. So he set him to reading law, but when he was seventeen Junius put his foot down on that and took himself off and did what he wanted.

He was still a very young man when he became famous, as famous as his great rival Edmund Kean. He toured Europe and made an ill-advised match with a Belgian woman five years older than himself, but it did not seem so ill advised at the time. He was quite taken with her lively ways and bright, tight costumes. He brought her back with him to England, and his father was furious. They set up housekeeping and soon they had a little boy. Junius kept adding to his popularity and fame, and though actors were not paid in those days as they are in this, still he made not only an adequate but a comfortable living and his wife was entirely happy.

Junius bore then the tender heart he was to carry always, the easy sympathy and kind ways, and he had only a few of the oddities that were to multiply and transume into the eccentricities that would become perilous fits of madness, a danger both to others and to himself. But at that time he was only a remarkably gifted young actor, a good earner, and Adelaide, his foreign wife, cherished him.

More and more, however, his eyes roved to other women, and when they encountered Mary Ann Holmes, a Reading girl, daughter of a widowed mother, selling posies in the Bow Street Market before the Covent Theater, they strayed from Adelaide forever. Tall

for a girl, Mary Ann was light in weight, light and lustrous of skin, with light, free movements. Her usual mouth was the earnest one of the greatly loving, soft, unsmiling, but she could laugh at any drollery. Later, when there wasn't anything to laugh at any more, she learned to smile, but she learned it between tears and it never served her well. Her hair was glossy, dark as night, a mass of glistening ringlets. It cost her some pain to gather them up into the decent confinement of a twist or roll behind, when her first baby was six months old and her years of discretion would seem to have begun, but she did it resolutely. The pupils of her eyes were of such size on most occasions that one would fancy her a black-eyed woman, but these eyes were of a dapple hazel, in constant sea, gem and cloud change. Them, with her love of love, she bequeathed particularly to her son John Wilkes.

Junius Brutus Booth, the famous young actor, won the heart of Mary Ann in five minutes but valued it not the less for his easy conquest, his own being given in return. First he took her to France with him when he went on tour. Unwearying of her sweetness (to his astonishment) he carried her then to Deal, in England. He bought a horse named Peacock, a rompish little black pony with markings like large white daisies scattered over him, and he used to set Mary Ann upon Peacock while he walked alongside. But Deal was a summer resort, people one knew crowded there, and Junius cast about in his mind to think how he and his sweetheart could be longer together without being discovered. Not long in deciding, he bought passage to the West Indies, taking Peacock along. When they stopped at Funchal, on the island of Madeira, and Mary Ann told him ashamedly that she was pregnant, he began to consider, not how he could retain her for a few weeks but how he could keep her with him forever. Soon after, a clipper ship, the *Two Brothers*, sailed from Funchal, bound for America. On it were Junius, Mary Ann and Peacock. They walked off it forty-four days later, in Norfolk, Virginia, as much in love as ever, except Peacock, who considered himself ill used and was quite sulky for a week.

In America, Junius started acting, of course, and was appreciated from the start. In October, in the year 1821, enough money was taken in at his New York benefit so that a few months later he

could buy a farm. That was what he decided to do: put Mary Ann upon an isolated farm. She was not averse to it, for the need to be seen and admired by all was not one of her failings.

Junius Brutus Booth, Jr., called June, was born around Christmas-time, 1821, in Charleston, but the other nine babies Mary Ann produced without losing her figure were to be born at The Farm, just outside Bel Air, Maryland. Junius did not break this piece of news to his wife, Adelaide, in London. He merely wrote to her, first, that he was "on tour" in America. Later, he sent word that he was so enamored of the country that he would not come home for a while. He continued to write, send her what money he could, deceive and put her off for nearly thirty years. Finally Adelaide got rather impatient and came over and surprised him—when the "little son Richard" he had left behind was almost thirty-seven years old. She was so scandalized by what she saw with her own eyes that she divorced him, after many a noisy and conspicuous scene, and it was a great shame to the Maryland Booths who never spoke of the matter to anyone. After that, Junius and Mary Ann got married, on Johnny's thirteenth birthday.

At the beginning and for many years (later they spent their winters in Baltimore) Junius and Mary Ann lived on The Farm exactly like lovers from time's beginning have wanted to live together. They had no close neighbors, no friends of nuisance proportions, no wearisome social life. They had tastes in common, a pretty home, three ferocious dogs to guard them, and plenty of hired help. While they had no slaves, many masters would rent their Negroes out for small pay, and all the hard labor of the land and household was done by them.

A lonely spot, with only a crooked path leading to it, it did not seem lonely, and the mail, thrown by the horn-blowing postboy once a week over the gate a quarter of a mile away where the coach road passed, came often enough to suit them. Junius took pride in The Farm. The ample four-roomed cabin with loft above and kitchen behind was whitewashed and plastered, the window frames, shutters and doors painted red. This gave it a fine, fairy-tale look, set as it was among trees, and many a queen if she could have seen it would have given up her throne to keep house there with

someone she loved. It was a large farm of a hundred and fifty acres, and while some of it was left to forest and meadow, much of it was cleared, a vineyard planted and an orchard laid out. A dairy and stables were built. The wonderfully limpid spring falling into a tiny pool where a big green bullfrog lived was made much of by the pair and they had a marble ledge and steps constructed for its embellishment.

Mary Ann did wonders with the inside of the house, furnishing her simple parlor with a table, a few chairs, a corner cupboard full of pretty china, brass andirons, a spinning wheel, three engravings and a looking glass, yet these she arranged so tastefully and with such care that it seemed a place of elegance.

A year after they came here to live, Junius' father, who had been let in on the secret, arrived from London to see them. He was a small, delicate man with a sharp tongue and gentle temper, a scholarly mind and worldly ways. He wore his hair, white as his spotless linen, in a little pigtail down his back. He and Mary Ann had their heads together in no time. He sent for his small library of books and stayed on at The Farm till he died, which he did sixteen years later when Johnny was a year old. Mary Ann cried for him for months and, in fact, missed him the rest of her life. He drank, and to excess, but not with Junius, his son, who could "drink with any tinker in his own language." Each berated the other severely for his lamentable weakness, but kept it from Mary Ann as much as possible, Grandfather usually doing his drinking in the town of Bel Air, and Junius his when on tour.

For of course the lover had to earn money, and that was where the rub came. He had to be away for weeks and weeks at a time in fall and winter, acting on the stage in all the large cities. Traveling was no joke in those days. For every good bed there were twenty uncomfortable ones, and it was the same with meals. Mary Ann always thought that the strain of these journeys, and the strain of acting, brought his madness upon him.

He was never very mad when at home, even in later years, but abroad he was talked of more and more as "odd as the very devil" and in one newspaper account he was said to be "a lunatic of the first water." Desdemona was scared to death of him half the time



and Richmond, who had often to stand up and fight for his very life, was once chased nearly two blocks by wild-eyed Richard III. He might walk on stage drunk. He might, and frequently did, devise and interject into the play some sudden bizarre stage business that threw everybody off cue, but managers forgave his every sin and let him do what he would. He was a heaven-born actor and they knew it.

When June, their first little son, was two years old, Mary Ann had Rosalie. Grandfather named her. Then she had a little boy named Henry Byron. He died. Then she had three more children—Mary Ann, Frederick, Elizabeth. They died, too, one after another.

When baby Mary Ann died, Junius was away. He got home a week afterward. Frantic with grief, for she was a little beauty, he had the Negroes go down to the family graveyard, down by the beech and tulip trees, and dig her up and bring her to the parlor. There he tried with all his power to make her wake up. He was "never very mad" when at home, as has been said, but on a few occasions he was mad enough. Another time was when, at the age of thirteen or fourteen, daisy-strewn Peacock died. Death infuriated Junius, he would not have allowed so much as a beetle to perish if he could have helped it, and when the little piebald horse stopped breathing it was more than he could stand. He begged Mary Ann to lie upon it, pray and revive their dear old friend. She would not, so he thrust her down upon the carcass, saying, "Pray! Pray, for God's sake!" Grandfather couldn't do a thing with Junius. Finally the Negroes ran for help, and the neighbors came to lift the tortured man up bodily and get him to bed. He stayed there and slept for a whole day and night, sobbing in his sleep.

Mostly, however, he was himself when at The Farm, loving, merry, a delightful, indulgent son, husband and father.

Edwin was born when June was twelve years old, Asia, "in remembrance of that country where God first walked with man," two years later; and three years after her came Johnny. The last child, born when Johnny was two, was called Joseph.

It was lovely on The Farm. Evenings in bad weather were spent indoors. Junius would read aloud to the family, or take the parts of plays, or tell entrancing stories. He would often take a



daughter or son on his lap, even when they were quite big—Johnny was more than twelve when he sat there the last time and his father took hold of his curly head and laid it on his shoulder while he recited *Lycidas*. Balmy evenings in summer were as sweet, for then Junius and Mary Ann and Grandfather took chairs out under the trees. Children of the neighborhood would come there and, with the Booth offspring, *tread the green grass*, joining hands, dance around in a circle and sing. They sang "Lady Queen Ann she sits in the sun" and "Oats, peas, beans and barley groves" and "Here come three gallants out of Spain, all to court your daughter Jane." The moonlight would come on like stage lights, it was beautiful to watch them under it, going in and out of the thick shade of trees, melodiously singing. When Junius turned to Mary Ann her eyes would glisten and he often held her hand.

Mad abroad and sound, or mostly sound, at home, drunk abroad and sober, or mostly sober, at home, Junius, the great actor, loved Mary Ann undeviatingly for more than thirty years, and then he died.

The way he died was this. June, the oldest boy, upon growing up, became an actor like his father. His gifts being not so great, he later took to stage managing and building and owning large theaters, which made him rich and famous. However, he began as an actor. When gold was discovered in California and people began flocking there, he flocked, too. He went in 1850 and returned two years later for a visit, not wealthy, but so full of stories of the wealth and honor that an actor might reap there that his father's imagination was quite inflamed. Nothing would do but Junius, Sr., must return to Eldorado with his son June. He would remain there a few months and come back with enough money so that he would never have to leave Mary Ann's side again. He would, in short, be able to retire.

Even Mary Ann, who thought he had not been looking well and to whom the thought of separation by such a distance bore heavily, was seduced by the picture painted by her enthusiastic son. It did not seem much to have to undergo—merely another of the partings to which she was so accustomed, a few months of worry and waiting, and then reunion, this time forever. She gave her consent. Edwin, then past eighteen, wanted to go, too, for he was a budding

actor in his own right and had been on a tour or two of his own, but his father said he should stay home.

For some reason, as many times as Junius had taken leave of Mary Ann, this was the saddest. He kissed her twenty times, their tears mingling, and no one but themselves could have parted them, so tightly did they hold each other.

In New York, while June was out buying their tickets on a steamer to Panama, Junius went out to see the sights, met up with old friends, got unspeakably drunk, and wound up back home on The Farm! He did not know how he had got there, but he knew *why*—to kiss his sweetheart Mary Ann, to hold her in his arms and tell her how he loved her, one more time. This leave-taking, then, was still more heart rending than the one before, but somehow, for the sake of the happy years to come, they got through it. When he left, Edwin went with him, to accompany him all the way to his journey's end.

The three then, father, June and Edwin, set sail for California. Junius gave brilliant performances there through July, August and September. He started home the first week in October, leaving his sons behind, with quite a hefty purse—not enough to retire on but enough to say it had paid to go out there (not that Mary Ann would care). Drunk and sick and sick and drunk the whole trip, he discovered, upon arriving in New Orleans the middle of November, that whether he had lost, bet, gambled or been swindled out of it, his money was almost gone. In panic he applied to his old friend, the manager of the St. Charles Theater, and was engaged to give six performances there. They were as splendid as anything he ever did, the audience nearly tore the house down, and they were his very last. He caught a bad cold. When he left New Orleans by river boat he was so ill he could hardly stand. A day later he was discovered in his stateroom to be in an alarming condition.

"Have you a wife?" they asked him.

He nodded, his eyes full of tears.

"The best . . ." he whispered.

There was no medicine on board. They tried to give him brandy but he could not swallow it. Someone soaked a rag in it and laid that to his lips but he pushed it away. "No more in life," he said.

"Do you wish to send a message to your wife?" they asked.

He shook his head, but then he changed his mind and tried to say something but nobody knew what it was.

He died on the last day of November, 1852.

They telegraphed Mary Ann that he was sick and she hurried to meet the steamer in Cincinnati, praying every step of the way.

Like himself, now, she felt the fury against death. In Baltimore, where she took the dead man, she kept him several days in a room all hung with white, a bust of Shakespeare beside him. For some reason, as though this perhaps would entice him back, she let down her hair, streaked now with gray, in the old girlish way, refused to put on black clothes and never left off crying. So long and so intensely did she stare upon his face, that once his eyelids seemed to flutter, his lips move. Transported by joy, she went for a doctor in the middle of the night.

Junius Brutus Booth was buried after that, in the Baltimore Greenmount Cemetery, while snow circled down in slow and heavy flakes.

---

## VII

*"See, where 'mid work of his own land he lies,  
Fretted by sallies of his mother's kisses,  
With light upon him from his father's eyes!  
See, at his feet, some little plan or chart,  
Some fragment from his dream of human life,  
Shaped by himself. . . ."*

Intimations of Immortality: WORDSWORTH

---

JOHNNY'S MOTHER, ENSNARED from the minute he was laid in her arms by the beauty he was to grow up with and carry to his grave, insisted he was a remarkable baby. His father did, too. Even June admitted it, Rosalie offered herself as his slave, and small Edwin and smaller Asia conjoined in treating him gently and kissing him much through babyhood and acting as his staunch guardians when he got bigger. Joseph, who came after him, never really had a look-in. Johnny was the pet, prince and pendragon, but the last little boy did not much mind this state of affairs. For one thing, he never knew any difference, and at any rate, when he got old enough, he fell as much under Johnny's spell as anybody. By grace and spirit, daring, invention, tact, imagination, a strong will and a sunny face, half rogue and half seraph, he wrapped them all around his little finger.

Of all, perhaps his mother was most helplessly lost. She could not bear to correct him, but then, as she said, he did not seem to need much correction. His father, whenever he was at home, agreed with her and said that if he would just learn his lessons there wouldn't be a boy that could outshine him. His mother said he could always learn his lessons—she pointed out that everything he liked to do, he did well, it was only what he did not like to do that he did badly or not at all—but he was a child only once. He ought to

have a happy, healthy, carefree, thoughtless childhood, she said, all little ones should, and nobody disputed the point with her, though the rest of the children learned their lessons fairly well.

With books in the house, and all the family, Johnny included, fond of reading, the problem of education was not a pressing one. They had Grandfather's books here and there among a library of their own—Shelley, Coleridge, Keats, a *Gazetteer of the World*, an English and a French dictionary, Racine, Alfieri, Tasso, Dante, Burton's *Anatomy of Melancholy*, Plutarch's *Morals and Lives*, Milton, all of Shakespeare, the Koran, Locke's *Essay on the Human Understanding*, Paley's *Theology*, Byron, histories of Greece and Rome, Felicia Hemans, the *Life of Algernon Sidney* and others.

However, they were all expected to go to school, and did. At first, one after another as the time came, they went to the public school in that vicinity, but it was not a good one. Not only through the years were the teachers inadequate and ignorant, but also often vicious. One, whose short career was a long, glorious holiday for his little scholars, was a drunkard, one a dope taker. However, all the Booth children had to go to this school, for longer or shorter periods, depending on the depravity of the current teacher. They learned the three R's after a fashion but finished their education elsewhere. None had great erudition or many years of school, but their parents did not greatly fear for their future, for they were all readers and glittering with personality, except Rosalie, whose personality was like a ruffled dress turned inside out, so that she became a real recluse and never married.

Johnny and Joseph went to the Bel Air Academy for some five years. Asia was a day student at the Carmelite Convent. Then Johnny, who would not apply himself, was put into a large boarding school kept by Quakers, in a Quaker settlement at Cockeysville.

Wasn't he glad, though, when the last day of school came!

It was fine June weather and here Asia arrived, dressed in white with a little white bonnet on her curls and white flowers in her hands, and here Mother was—they had come by the cars to see the program, and eat lunch, and take him home—looking beautiful in pale-gray mull with lilacs all around her hat. Wasn't he glad though! He played a scene from Shakespeare like a starving lion gnawing



on the thigh of a hartebeest. Never was there a more diabolic fiend-in-human-form than Shylock, more palsied, more ancient, more hideous. Oh, the fellow was a perfect horror, he writhed, he twisted, he ground his teeth—"I am very glad of it, I'll plague him, I'll torture him, I am glad of it"—until his mother had to hide her smile behind her glove, her fond eyes beaming. Wasn't he happy! They had a picnic lunch under the trees, a delightful one. A Quakeress said of him to her neighbor, "He is like a newborn rose with the morning dew upon it," and it was true.

Going home to The Farm, he told Asia and Mother what the gypsy told him. He had met her in the woods one day, she had wide red-and-yellow skirts and a blue bodice and thick gold earrings, there was a funny smell about her, delicious and strange, and she had told his fortune.

He told them about it. "She was pretty old," he said, "about twenty-five. She said she'd tell my fortune if I'd cross her palm with silver. That means you have to pay them. They won't do it for nothing. So I gave her a quarter—"

"That was too much," Asia said.

"Well, you have to," Johnny said. "Because if you don't cross their palm with silver they won't tell you *one word*. So I gave her my quarter. And then she said—" Now, as he liked to do, he imitated her. Before their eyes her dark, mysterious face took shape beneath her snakelike, coal-black hair, her thin and cunning lips prophesied the future, her large and cunning eyes stared hypnotically. She gazed down into his palm. "La, la, la," she said with an unidentifiable accent, "bad hand, a bad hand, the lines are all criscras. It's full of sorrow—here—and full of trouble—there—and hearts broke—here—and hearts broke—there—oh, la, young man. A bad hand, trouble everywhere. Young man! Live, you will, rich, famous, scattering your money. Die, you will, young and like a star of beauty, a star upon the sky fall'n down. Oh, the girls will cry! Oh, their scattered hearts! Many will cry . . . but la, the enemies behind! The enemies, many as the soldiers in a war in Spain, many as the enemies of England!"

It took a little while for the gypsy to vanish. . . . They almost had to rub their eyes.

"Oh, Johnny, you must be fibbing!" Asia said. "She couldn't have said all those mean things."

Mary Ann's eyes were grave. "She didn't really say all that, did she, Johnny?"

"Of course she did." He laughed. "But I don't care. I don't care if it all comes true. It'll be a long time off. And I'll be rich, and famous, and that's the main thing."

"And have all the girls in love with you," Asia said teasingly.

"Girls," he said. "I don't know why I should bother with *girls*. They can keep their old hearts—I don't want them."

"They shouldn't allow gypsies to roam around and tell children such things—" Mary Ann said musingly.

"I'm not a child, I turned fourteen last month, you want to remember," Johnny put in.

"But of course it's all a big lie," his mother went on. "Except maybe the nice parts, like where you're going to make lots of money and get famous and break the ladies' hearts."

Johnny went one more year to school and that was at St. Timothy's Hall in Catonsville, a military academy, where he was an artillery cadet, handsomely clad in a tight-fitting steel-gray uniform, and the Reverend Mr. van Bokkelen and Professor Onderdonk tried to teach him what they knew. On the side he took lessons on the flute, and dancing, learning to do the Highland fling, sailor's hornpipe and a "difficult" Polish dance.

Mary Ann spent her winters in Baltimore, in a house there, and only the summers on The Farm. June, the oldest boy, was long gone from home. Rosalie, a grown woman, never seen except by her immediate family, stayed as close to her mother as a chick to her hen. Edwin, already an actor though untrained before he left for California, was now, after long months of trial and error, a polished one, and would go far. Asia, extraordinarily beautiful, was at home, waiting, as young ladies must wait for their own reasons. She had many beaux to choose from, little minx that she was, and the one she favored—John Sleeper Clarke, also a young actor—she did not as yet favor to the extent that she would consent to marry him. Johnny did not like him very well, nor any of the beaux. Until, like the

hero in a romance, he went away to seek his fortune, which would not be long, he thought, he would just as soon Asia didn't bother with other fellows. He liked to have her all wrapped up in him, in his dreams and aspirations, talking to him and listening to him, with her eyes—like looking into a glass at his own eyes—sparkling, and her head on one side. My, she had thick curls, wonderful curls. His would have been like that if he had been a girl and let his hair grow long, as she did.

The beaux didn't bother so much on The Farm, though they managed to get out there on occasion, no matter how hot it was or whether it rained, and come up the crooked lane from the coach road.

Johnny slept in the loft which faced the east, and he was glad it did. "No setting sun view for me," he said. "It's too blamed melancholy. Let me see him rise every time!" He liked the smell of the oak floor, kept so well scrubbed by black hands that it was always slightly damp, and would not have a carpet upon it for this reason, though it was often shockingly cold to his bare feet. A great pair of antlers, spoils of some long-forgotten conquest, hung upon the walls, and swinging from the points were swords, pistols, daggers and a disqualified old gun with a flaring muzzle like a trumpet. He once had had a lance he used to make rushes with, like Don Quixote or the Champion Knight of the local tourneys, couching it properly or merely waving it in the air while he galloped on his horse through the woods, yelling wildly. He was practicing to be in the Deer Creek Tournaments, he said, when Mother ran out of the house in terror upon hearing the bloodcurdling shouts and begged to know if he were killed. What was he yelling for, though? "The warriors used to scare their enemies like that," he said. (They never came on them from behind without a sound, except Indians.) "You scared me out of my wits," Mother said. "I wish you would quit that game." But he kept on doing it for a while until he got to be eleven or so and it seemed sort of childish. Besides, the lance was broken. He had a piece of it yet.

He had a few shelves running along one wall and on these were ranged his schoolbooks, Bulwer, Marryat, Longfellow, Whittier, N. P. Willis, Poe. Byron and Shakespeare, carried up from the book-

case downstairs, were often crowded in with them, or to be found, open and face downward, either at the foot of the bed or on the floor beside it.

One autumn he conceived a great admiration for Agesilaus, the Spartan king, and discarded his feather mattress and pillow to sleep on others of close-packed straw, but this enthusiasm passed, much to his mother's relief, and he took them back when he struck up an acquaintance with Epicurus, who suited him to a *T* forever after. Asia took great pains to make him a multicolored quilt, of a complicated pattern called Job's-tears. He begged in his winning way, making them all laugh, even Asia who should have been vexed, not to be obliged to accept it. "If there's anybody I can't abide, it's Job," he said, "and to think of lying down under Job's-tears, especially such walloping big ones as these"—he put a finger on a patch of green—"is more than I can abide." So Asia turned up her nose at him and said he couldn't have it *now* if he begged on his bended knees, but she wasn't really vexed. When he put an arm around her neck and kissed her, she kissed him back and said he was a perfect terror.

He was as tall now as he was meant to be, not as tall as he would have liked, but Mother and Asia stood him up against the wall and measured him, and said he was five feet eight inches. They didn't press down very heavy on his thick hair though, and he had cunningly arched his feet, bringing his heels a little off the floor, so he may have been a few fractions of an inch shorter. From babyhood, he had not lost his beauty for one day, even by that badge of boyhood, a discolored eye, or a temporary blemish like a pustule. Even the loss of his baby teeth, the other ones growing in, the priceless teeth he was to die with, did not seem to worsen his looks—nothing did. The dark beard which came in across his rounded chin and up his cheeks, proudly to be shaved off every day with his father's dangerous old razor, did not change Ganymede to Vulcan, nor did the broadening of his shoulders, narrowing of his waist or his voice changing from high to low.

A very little boy may be beautiful, a young man must be handsome when he is not ugly or in between, but Johnny kept the look of beauty that the Quakeress saw, that everybody had noted either



with indifference or interest from the time they first beheld him, and was indisputably beautiful, quarrel with the word as one may. It was like a high rank and he enjoyed it, for he recognized its worth at an early age. Even when he could not see himself in any mirror or still or running water, even in the dark, snugly covered in his bed, he was aware of it and far back in his mind could see his own face and form. He looked upon his real reflection many times a day and still oftener on the reflection of himself within himself—moving, smiling, speaking, riding Cola like a prince, lying on his back on the grass with his hands under his head—so his beauty was as perfectly familiar to him as sunlight.

What might have been a threat to it in others, like an ugly gash or two where they showed the most, were his frightful displays of temper when crossed or baffled, his sulkiness when slighted, his belligerence when criticized, but these were the natural result of his upbringing. Some other way came the fits of melancholy, not known when little, that appeared and reappeared as he grew older and might have muddled a face of lesser light. His they did not, only to emphasize his splendor, as an artist by a soft-stroked shadow concludes the statement of beauty that would be incomplete without it.

Now he was as tall as he would be, sixteen, and nearly ready to go and seek his fortune. He knew that he was going to be an actor like his father and Junius and Edwin. Even if they had not been actors, he would be, he felt, for he considered he had more power and ability than could conceivably have been a family inheritance. He had already committed several roles to memory and spent many hours reciting them, with whatever gestures seemed to be in order, to Asia, Rosalie, Joseph, Mother, the neighbors or household servants. All agreed that there was nobody like him and that he would zoom like a comet when once he got started.

But Mother said he had time, and of course he did have time, there was no big hurry necessary. There were many ways to spend it on The Farm in summer. When he was small he used to think up things to make everyone laugh, like hitching up the horse to the old sleigh and taking a sleigh ride all around the yard, singing "God Rest Ye, Merry Gentlemen," on the hottest day in July. But



now he did not care particularly about making anyone laugh. He would rather they marveled. He still played a prank or two but only to show his finesse. Once he dressed up in Asia's clothes, tied a bonnet on with a lace veil and went daintily out along the fields, skirting the woods, to see "if the darkies can discover me." They took off their hats and respectfully saluted him as he passed like the most ethereal of ladies.

Best of all, perhaps, was to loll beneath the trees in the deep grass and talk with Asia. Rosalie was always indoors with Mother, Joseph had interests elsewhere, so the brother and sister were thrown much into each other's company. Where Asia was, Johnny was, and vice versa.

She was nineteen, a tender companion. Though of no great size and of delicate complexion, she could ride as well as a boy. They had no sidesaddle but she could keep a firm seat sideways on a military saddle by holding tight with her knee to the front and her toe in one stirrup and gallop her mount like a highbred lady. They rode out almost every day, morning rides together when everything glittered like diamonds with dew, and night rides by moonlight or starlight, Johnny on Cola, Asia on Belle. Cola di Rienzi was a colt as black as ink, with a graceful fall of mane and tail and an "Ivanhoe" forehead. He could stamp for "No," bow for "Yes," play dead and keep to heel like a hound, and he could run like a gazelle. Johnny always started off by saying, "The Choctaws are after you! Run for your life! Run, laddie!" and Cola seemed to believe it, for he shot ahead like an arrow. Belle merely galloped and Johnny would be far ahead for half a mile or so, but then he would start tugging on the reins a little so Asia could catch up. After that they would lope leisurely along together, generally singing, "Fair, Fair with Golden Hair," "I'm a-going Away by de Light ob de Moon," "On a Bright and Summer's Morning," "Soldier, Soldier," "Barbara Allen" and other songs. They discovered that the horses liked to keep time—if they sang a lively tune, the horses stepped right along to it, if a slow, sad one, they dragged as if they were pulling a hearse. They used to try out different melodies to see, and Cola and Belle always fell into measure. They decided animals must have

a great ear for music, particularly when Asia discovered what the frogs would do.

She was sitting on a mossy knoll one afternoon in the dense woods some distance from the house, beside the swift little stream that cut through the land there for some way and then lost itself in a tangle of wild grapevine. Johnny had gone to Bel Air, and she was alone, taking a lazy stitch or two on a piece of linen, and softly singing. And the little brown frogs came out of the water and from their coigns of vantage beside it to hear her! They gathered like people to hear a concert, decently, decorously, all facing her, in a sort of half circle, looking upwards. She nearly laughed out loud. Later she made Johnny go with her and sit as still as stone. She took the guitar with her this time, seated herself the same way and began the music, and sure enough, here came the frogs again, one by one, to the concert. It was like a great discovery, somehow, to Asia and Johnny, it excited them and made them giddy for hours, as though it were some wonder and they had been little children.

Johnny loved to read Byron, or other poets, aloud to Asia, but Byron was a great favorite for them both, though they understood very few of his allusions. Neither the boy nor girl mentioned what they had got wind of by reading or hearing—that the poet and his own sister, or half sister, which did not by any means halve the black sin, were once really in love with each other, as people are *in love*. Byron had cut his name and Augusta's in a heart on an elm tree, a disgrace to them both. Once Johnny in an idle moment had cut a heart with his jackknife upon a black walnut tree and put in the letters J-o-h-n and thought A-s-i-a, but that was because her name had four letters, too, and would fit—no other reason. Then, his forehead hot, he had hurriedly carved out J-e-s-s, the name of a neighbor's daughter whose hair was the wrong color. He felt angry then, unaccountably, that he had cut the heart and put the names in and scarred the tree, so he scarred it still more, angrily, chipping off the whole thing, leaving a bare place as big as his two hands like a bane upon it.

*Don Juan* gave them many an hour's amusement. Asia read sometimes, well enough, but without much emphasis, and Johnny was

always eager after the proper interval to take the book himself and hold forth, with great expression,

I hate inconstancy—I loath, detest,  
Abhor, condemn, abjure the mortal made  
Of such Quicksilver clay that in his breast  
No permanent foundation can be laid;  
Love, constant love, has been my constant quest,  
And yet last night, being at a masquerade,  
I saw the prettiest creature, fresh from Milan,  
Which gave me some sensations like a villain!

It must be said that Asia wearied a little sooner than he, and that was strange, for in this reading he was doing all the work! But she was an amiable girl and would listen for hours. Sometimes she sewed or made a pretense of tatting, but usually she had her eyes on his face (ever in “flux and fleeting”) while Johnny read, ranted Shakespearean rôles, or dreamed, as he often did aloud, of the fame to be his for the seeking. There were a great many minor details connected with the glorious harangue but this was the gist of it: He was going to go away. He was going on the stage. He was going to act *better than Father*. He was going to turn the world upside down with wonder and admiration. He was going to be rich. And then—and then—well, what *wouldn't* he do!

They went to a party, too, sometimes, in Bel Air or in the surrounding neighborhood, but these seemed countrified and the other young people a little barbarous to exquisite Asia and Johnny. Her homemade, pure silk dress and his claret coat and dove-colored trousers made a couple of courtiers of them, a little too good and bright to be there at all, though they took part in the games, verbarium, the minister's cat, birds have feathers, and break the Pope's neck. They danced; Asia was gracious to her supper partner and Johnny sent his into a perfect fever with his gallantry, but it was as though they had come from a castle in a strange land, to see how doggerel creatures might be in the midst of their heathen customs, as though they would go back and say, It was the most ridiculous thing you ever beheld in your life.

He had “practiced up” for it in childhood, but Johnny never rode in the Deer Creek Tournaments, though he took Asia and Mother

there to see them once or twice. The men who participated were dressed in spurious armor or as warriors of olden days, and they rode like the wind at bars decorated by dangling rings, trying to spear them with the long lances in their hands. Smaller and smaller rings went up, the contest waxed hotter, and finally the rider who had speared the most rings in a given time was declared Champion Knight. It was dangerous sport, for the men were reckless and one horseman had his neck broken when he was knocked from his mount by a swiping lance. Johnny could ride like a Gaucho, but even at sixteen it had come to seem a little rash to him to risk one's unique life, and more than that, one's unique face, that a broken jaw or gravel-scraped cut might mar forever, a grievance to the very world.

He belonged to the Know-Nothings in Bel Air, a sort of debating society, where the chief question contested was whether or not a limit should be placed on white labor. With great privileges falling into the hands of the unnaturalized Irish immigrants, it was feared that white labor would eventually supersede that of the blacks. Johnny plucked all his conclusions from the hot wind of emotion and did not dip them from the cool well of reason, for this, in him, was only a little trickle from the rocks. He decided the Irish had no business coming to America at all, let alone making nuisances of themselves the way foreigners generally did.

With the help of an esoteric vocabulary, half of whose words he could not have defined if called upon to do so, which he never was, a resonant voice, little diffidence and a great deal of fire, he managed to be considered an astute debater. However, the Know-Nothings more or less bored him.

The liquor was something else again. Persimmon beer or apple cider, cherry bounce or juleps, corn whisky or brandies (he had a taste for brandy even then, later to be his sole drink) made quite an affair out of the little meetings. He was pleased to make the discovery that he had a head for liquor, but this seemed a natural attribute to one of such superior gifts as himself, so he was not surprised. Draining the cup in those days was no great temptation and like carrying coals to Pittsburgh, for he was already lit up with vainglory and ardor and could have burst into flame if a door opened.



He and Mother used to have a talk sometimes about the days to come. Once she wondered timidly if he *ought* to be an actor, if it weren't too hard and unsettled a life. He asked her ironically, what he should be then? She racked her brain over the matter but all she could suggest was, first, a lawyer, while he sat with his arms folded and a wondrously becoming and comical sneer upon his face, and then, a professor, while he lost the sneer and burst out with a laugh like a stage villain that changed to his own boyish one when she laughed, too. For it was really absurd. Then she confessed that the truth was, the only thing she could think of that would fit his attainments was for him to be a king and rule a country like—well, like France perhaps. He thought so himself, though he knew she spoke in fun, but he pointed out that a throne might be pretty hard to get hold of.

Well, she said, anyway, she had saved all his father's costumes and promptbooks for no one but himself—even if June had his nose out of joint and Edwin sulked—and when the time came, he should have them. These sons, making names for themselves on the Pacific Coast, had assumed the responsibility for the family after their father's death. They were regularly sending home money, not large amounts, for they did not have it, and Junius had an extravagant young actress to maintain, but enough to support the family in strict economy, letting some of the help go. Yet Johnny was to have the fine costumes and valuable promptbooks, though both the other boys were actors of reputation and Edwin especially had had his heart set on them. Junius and Edwin did not think it was fair.

Junius was to remain in California for fourteen years altogether; Edwin returned to the East four years after his father's death. He came home when Johnny was seventeen, a stunning young man of twenty-three, with a dark, romantic look, half priest, half bandit, debonair clothes and a polish laid upon him by many adventures, defeats and triumphs. He was also a fine actor and was to be a better one. Asia was nearly out of her wits about her brother at first. It was Edwin this and Edwin that and Edwin wants apple cake and Edwin sit out of the draft—until his younger brother felt like pushing him into the creek. Brooding like a lover, Johnny watched her primp and fuss, and he thought to himself there was



never anything more preposterous in the world. But it displeased Asia that Edwin had a girl already, even though he had just begun playing the eastern theaters and only just got home. She sulked about it and was sure he couldn't be really in love!

Edwin teased her and said maybe he was and maybe he wasn't, but, good heavens, she didn't want him to fall in love with her and marry *her*, did she? She answered sharply, and he teased some more, and finally they fell out. After that, she turned back to Johnny, capricious little witch that she was, and by her sweetness and goodness, tenderness and wholehearted attention—also her subsequent coolness to Edwin—soon formed with him an accord as warm as ever and lifted his spirits to the skies.

Things were different, however. The Serpent had entered Paradise. Edwin left on a long and successful tour, Asia's allegiance was Johnny's own again, the weather was lovely, the books were there, The Farm was the same. But now Johnny grew restless, eager, he had no more time to waste. He was in a hurry. Could Hyperion sit around while Apollo was begging to be knocked off his perch? Could Jason? With a big day's work cut out for him? Not much! Johnny had to go.

He went, not to Mars or to Venus which seemed possible at the time, but to Philadelphia, the City of Brotherly Love!

The night before, they had a celebration. Rosalie baked a big cake that sagged somewhat in the middle and lasted well over a week but was very pretty for the hollow place was filled up with frosting. Before it hardened she wrote JOHNNY on it with a knitting needle as though it had been his birthday. Mother constantly remembered things he must not forget to take with him and fretted about what was to become of his linen in the hands of Irish washerwomen! He got a kiss every time she passed him, but he did not mind, he was thinking so hard of other matters that he scarcely knew it and sometimes gently brushed her away as one would brush away a tiresome pet that worries one when deep in concentration. Sometimes he burst out like an operatic baritone with "I love the Merry, Merry Sunshine" or another of his favorites, or took a stance and passionately recited *To be or not to be*, or came up behind Rosalie to blow upon a scolding lock, making her scream and tell

him to behave himself, or threw himself into a sailor's hornpipe that threatened the china in the closet and sent them all running to subdue him.

Asia picked flowers for the supper table, and set it with the best linen and tableware, and shed many tears and said it was all her fault. The reason she considered it all her fault was because her fiancé John Clarke (she had finally consented to marry the young actor though she could not be brought to say when) was in Philadelphia, playing there. If nobody they knew was playing Philadelphia, Johnny wouldn't have taken a notion to go there, Asia said, blaming herself. If John Clarke had not written her such letters as he did about his reception there and how kind the city was to actors, and she hadn't read them aloud to Johnny, even a few of the love parts, which made him scowl, he never would have decided to go to Philadelphia to start his career.

Mother said reasonably, yes, but he was sure to start *somewhere* and it might as well be Philadelphia as anywhere else. She did think, however, that the logical thing would have been to go where his brother Edwin was, and get his start with Edwin, who could have seen that he had some few little advantages and maybe offer him a correction or two if he didn't know right away what he was expected to do. After all, he had not had any real *training* and there might be things— She looked carefully to make sure that Johnny was not within earshot before she said all this. He would have ranted terribly.

"Why, I wouldn't go within a hundred miles of him!" he said dramatically when she had been so unwise as to make the shy suggestion a few days previous. "I don't need *Edwin*, I can tell you!"

"What's Neddie done anyway?" Rosalie said mildly. "You used to love him so when you were little and wrote him those nice letters when he was out in California and everything. And now he's come home again and doing so well, and you're just as naughty as you can be about him."

"I don't need Edwin," he had repeated, glaring at his mother who had started the whole thing. "It'll be a blamed cold day, I can tell you, when I need *Edwin*."

---

# VIII

*"Good morning to the day, and next, my gold:  
Open the shrine, that I may see my saint!"*

Volpone: BEN JONSON

---

HE DID not send a single glance backward after the gig got out on the coach road and rolled for Baltimore. With his feet on the luggage, his hands not half a minute in the same position, his eyes on the sky (this being the best backdrop for himself in Father's emerald velvet smallclothes, buskin boots, plumed hat and jeweled dagger, taking bows before as many faces as stars upon the Milky Way), he sang partly and whistled partly and hummed partly, the whole way. "I'm going Away by de Light ob de Moon." Going away by the light of the sun, getting the world for a watch fob to dangle from his vest! Edwin? Who was he? As big as nothing. Johnny? Who was he? Anybody so stupid he doesn't know *that* had better wait and see!

Not much entranced by the sights along the way, as though this were the fiftieth and not the first long trip he had ever made, Johnny arrived in Philadelphia in the early afternoon. He was little the worse for wear and such a sight for sore eyes as he came hurrying up the street to John Clarke's boardinghouse that two girls, arm in arm, turned their heads involuntarily to get a better look at him.

In two hours, through John Clarke's manly help, his own good looks, and the famous name of Booth (it was put down as J. Wilkes, Johnny deciding that this would be commendable modesty in an untried actor with laurels yet to win), Johnny had signed a contract to attend daily rehearsals and appear in minor roles with the stock company at the Arch Street Theater for eight dollars a week.

He took a room across the hall from John Clarke's, a large and drafty room that became more and more cozy and homelike as the afternoon wore on. For the daughter of the house, a large girl with an exceptionally small waist and blond eyebrows, and the little maid-of-all-work, her face red with blushes under an unsteady pile of hair, took it upon themselves, after getting a good look at their new lodger, to arrive frequently with a soft tap at the door. Before evening, between the two of them, they made the room quite habitable. The daughter from time to time brought an extra down-filled counterpane, a triangular cerise pillow, a crystal water glass, a dented silver pin tray, a bottle of ink and a picture, under a convex glass, of an old man watering sheep. The little maid brought extra soap, extra towels, extra washcloths, and without saying a word and as discreetly as a lapwing, her face scarlet, removed the white china pitcher with water for washing, the washbowl and, from its curtained hiding place, the very *chamber* itself, and took them away. There was no cause for alarm, however, for she was soon back with another pitcher, bowl and chamber painted with cupids and garlands and trimmed with gold. "There!" she could not help exclaiming. "That's something like it!"

Johnny said charmingly that he was very pleased.

"Are you, sir?" she said, and he said, very pleased, and when she went to dust off a corner of the dresser her hand trembled.

Yet another rarity shortly found its way to his pleasant room. He felt a twinge of regret when afterward the little maid's reproachful eyes met his upon the stair or in the downstairs hall and she hurried sadly by, for it was not she but the daughter of the house who had been the bringer of this benefaction, and the servant was much prettier.

The daughter, for her part, ought not have been so solemn about it all, as though she had turned over the complete island of Ortygia, or looked such a new potato when she cried—and why *had* she cried?

He began to be quite revolted by the young lady of the house, for all her generosity, and avoided her as much as possible for the rest of his short stay, even going in and spending the night with John Clarke on one or two occasions on the pretext that his own



room was too noisy. John offered to sleep there himself, but Johnny then decided that it was homesickness that made him want company. For he was a gentleman in manners of the heart even then, and would not for the world have brought the young lady into disgrace by having her rashness disclosed. He congratulated himself on his quick thinking when, after the lights were blown out and the house was still, he strained his ears and heard soft footfalls and then a light—a very light—tap upon his door. After an interval he fancied he heard the hinges creak and thought of her groping her way in to find her pretty starling flown . . . and began a smile but stopped and looked tragic in the dark as though rehearsing for the stage.

Love, then, was easy—he had only to open his lips and the fruit of it fell in his mouth, had only to uncover his head and it ruffled his hair like a fragrant breeze, had only to reach an arm's length and the thick flowers of it were filling his hands till he couldn't hold any more.

But Fame was a tougher nut to crack.

Of course they gave him the poorest conceivable role, no role at all, you might say—that of a Venetian comrade in a very poor play, really a frightful play, called *Lucretia Borgia*. He had almost nothing to say and could not bring his mind to bear to learn even that, his disappointment was so great that his first appearance did not find him playing at least Hamlet, or Romeo. He was roundly rebuked at the tedious afternoon rehearsals he came to dread because he garbled his one long speech time after time.

The night he took his cue and instead of saying, "Madame, I am Petruchio Pandolfe," came out with, "Madame, I am Pondolfio Pet—Pedolfio Pat—Pantuchio Ped—damn it! What am I?" he was sure the loud hisses from the audience came from a claque placed there by the management especially to humiliate him. These same hired booers and hissers (he was sure they were hired) ruined his appearance as Dawson, an execrable part in an execrable play called *The Gamester*. They made him forget what he had to say entirely, and he stood gaping like a fool, until he was dragged off into the wings, their sibilances flying after him like an enraged swarm of bees. He was white with fury that night at this plot to ruin him,



particularly since a young lady of beauty and family, with whom he had become acquainted by accident, came by his invitation to see him in the night's performance. *She*, then, had seen his disgrace! When she managed to get to him a day later (for he fled the theater and did not escort her home as was planned) to say she was sorry for what happened, he glared at her so haughtily that the poor girl was bewildered and had no recourse but to take leave of him like a wrongdoer. She never saw him again and never forgot him.

John Clarke, for the sake of Asia, with two or three other Thespians who had known either his father or brothers, decided to pay a call on him in his room. They stayed for two hours and talked like Dutch uncles and when they left he was a sadder and wiser but scarcely humbler young man. It was not a roomful of hired scum of the earth, then, who had hissed him. It was the Philadelphians themselves—Northerners—Yankees—who had *dared*. Northerners! The ignorant and benighted, ugly, barbarous, inhospitable, rich and bloated North! He hated them, hated it, wanted to grind it under his heel, stamp on it, push it off the face of the earth. But he would show the North where to head in at! Just watch him! He strode back and forth from window to bed and from bed to window until the tornado of his rage blew over and he was enough distracted by his appearance in the cloudy mirror to lean over and inspect his face, put a hand to his brow, purse his lips and draw a theatrical sigh. Then he began to feel a little better.

His Philadelphia sojourn might still have brought him some triumph, he considered, if the varlet he challenged to a duel had picked up the gauntlet and acquitted himself like a man. Why, in Richmond they would fight to the death to avenge an "insulting look." But this bumpkin, also a player of minor parts, would not, and you cannot run a man through with a property sword if he refuses to defend himself. Moreover, the fellow having apologized, there was nothing for Johnny to do but accept his apology and they became friends. Nevertheless, he did think a duel might have brought him a good deal of notice.

Strangely enough, Johnny was not without friends and, in fact, soon became the pet of everyone about the theater. His overscaled vanity made him use his charm on one and all, whether scene-

shifter, stage carpenter or leading lady, and this charm being great, in spite of his faults, he was not long in winning real affection.

He had learned his parts now, and while no notice was paid of him in the press, still he got through them passably enough—though he never learned to breathe right—so that no more hisses turned his blood cold in his veins. Once or twice he got a spatter of applause. He learned a good deal about acting, not consciously but by absorbing it unawares. In his opinion, he had very little to learn. Unable to accept without an argument whatever mild criticism the portrayal of his parts elicited, he had to consider what they signified more deeply than he might otherwise have done, in order to defend his delineation of a given character. By this means he improved also. After a few weeks he was told that he “had promise,” and while he wanted to laugh in the manager’s face he merely looked modest and said thank you.

He moved two or three times. He got away as soon as he could from John Clarke’s boardinghouse where the sight of the landlady’s daughter revolted him, and the little maid was always reproaching him with her eyes because he had sullied another’s honor and broken another’s heart instead of her own. The fine pitcher and chamber and counterpane and bottle of ink went back where they came from. No news of suicide reaching his ears in the days following, he assumed that these misguided young females had made shift as well as they could and were going to try to live out their lives without him.

At each of two other boarding places, life was made pleasant for him by a doting girl. One was a young actress with plump arms and fresh blue eyes, who took him under her wing, the other a harpist who went clad in green watered silk with a lilac sash. He did not have to fly his nest another time . . . or shudder. Yet he was grateful to the first young lady for teaching him an important lesson: that he had the power of choice, it was not obligatory to take whatever Fate dropped into his arms, and that beauty, though never so authentic as one’s own, was yet preferable to what was not beautiful. Since they were all to be his for the taking, he resolved to be a careful chooser and to take only the best, as a man in a field of lilies will pick not all, but only the finest ones to make into a

bouquet, or at a loaded buffet will take only those morsels which tickle his palate most. From then on, he appraised with a cool eye, and only great excellence of tint, texture and line could cause him to surrender a small and temporary space in the sphere of his own splendor.

He was there several weeks but he never learned to like Philadelphia and was glad to depart from it, feeling, however, that since his apprenticeship was now served, the time had been well spent. He secured an engagement in Richmond for the winter months and on his way there stopped off at The Farm. At home, he was made as much of as if he had won acclaim, not only on the whole American continent but in Europe as well! Again Rosalie baked too large a cake, again Asia set the table with the best things, again Mother kissed and fluttered, and for a brief, happy week he told over and over the story of his many triumphs. Those upon another field were not recounted, having in his eyes but small significance—like saying he had been fed when hungry, and only with the most dainty fare. Asia guessed at them jealously, but he did not tell even her.

When they got on Cola and Belle and went out in the old way for one of their rides by moonlight, singing, it came to him that perhaps, of all, only Asia was quite beautiful enough . . . but that was like saying that only himself-in-herself was quite beautiful enough, worthy enough for loving . . . it rather pained him, it was such a lonely thought.

He didn't like it at all that Edwin would be playing in Richmond, too!

He learned the news at home and momentarily thought he might not fulfill his contract but get one somewhere else, perhaps New York. But then he changed his mind. He had been tried and not found wanting (after that first disaster or two) and though he had not been tried to the limit of his capacities, if there was a limit, still he was a trained actor, and if he couldn't play in the same city with *Edwin*, why, he couldn't play in the same city with a French poodle. So when the time came he packed up and left again, and the tears rained down behind him as before and he went to Richmond.

Even he had to admit that Edwin was no "Sir Oracle" and treated him very well, engaging a room for him and making him acquainted

with his friends. Johnny kept taking his concern for condescension, though, and was irritated by it. With no excuse to show his irritation, he could only be constrained, and Edwin regretted the mysterious gap between them that he could not seem to bridge. He wanted to smooth the way for Johnny if he could.

They were playing together and Edwin was careful not to offer a word of correction to Johnny at the first rehearsals, but on the second night after the show he went to his young brother's room and sat there and smoked and waited for him to come in so he could give him some advice.

Johnny smelled a little of brandy when he arrived with a hothouse rose in his buttonhole. Excitement had blackened his hazel eyes to a Spaniard's, but his step was not unsteady, for he had a head for liquor and was to have a greater one. He took off his coat and hung it over the back of a chair, then sat down and leaned back against the rose, crushing it.

Edwin said, idly, thinking how he could begin without causing the touchy young man to explode, "Why don't you put it in a glass of water?"

"Put what?" Johnny asked, surprised.

"The rose. It's not dead yet."

Johnny shrugged. "Well, it soon will be. What's on your mind, Neddie?"

"I'll tell you," Edwin said. "It's you. You've got to be told something and you've got to learn something, Johnny, or you're going to pay dearly for it. I'll tell you what it is. It's how to speak."

"I know," Johnny said, sitting up very straight and beginning to pale. "I've been expecting to hear something like that from you. I can't speak at all! I'm deaf and dumb. I use my hands. I use signs."

"You know what I'm talking about," Edwin said coolly, "and I'm taking the trouble to tell you for your own good, so don't be smart."

Johnny folded his arms.

"The first principle of all vocal study," Edwin said, "is that your chest should do the work, not your throat or mouth. You'll never get the volume you need without it, and you'll half kill yourself trying."



"Oh, is that so? Well, I'm glad to hear it."

"Yes, Johnny, that is so," Edwin said, ignoring his sarcasm. "Your chest has to supply the sound for talking or singing. You don't want to do it with your throat or just with your mouth. You have to strain so hard that the first thing you know, if you keep it up day after day, you're going to play hell with your voice. I know. I've seen it happen."

"You've seen a lot happen, haven't you?" Johnny said. "You're so wonderful, aren't you?"

"I've seen *that* happen, I can tell you, and it's no joke. An actor's voice is what he goes on, Johnny, it's his tool in trade, it's got to last him, and if he uses it the wrong way day after day and week after week, he's going to end up without any, and out on the street."

"Is that so? How kind of you to tell me."

"Yes, it's so, and don't sit there with that smirk on your face. I *know*, Johnny. I know what I'm talking about. Look, when you want to send your voice as far as it will go, start here." He pounded his chest. "Not here on top of your throat." He made a mewling sound to demonstrate. "It makes you sound like you're talking through your nose." He began the speech of Macbeth, "If it were done *when* 'tis done, then 'twere well . . . It were done quickly . . ." exaggerating his nasal proclivity in order to bring the lesson home.

Johnny got to his feet, his eyes dangerous. "Thank you for the fine lesson in the art of elocution, Professor Booth," he said with icy politeness. "I will see what I can do to *ruin everything I have that makes me different from you* and makes you shake in your shoes for fear you won't be the grand Panjandrum much longer."

Edwin laughed. "Johnny," he said, "you're just like Father playing Sir Edward Mortimer! Don't you see I want to help you, so you'll develop, so you'll get everything there is out of yourself? Do you think I'm jealous? Do you think I care if the time comes when you can act circles around me? I'd be glad, Johnny. I'd be proud. I couldn't any more be jealous of you than I—well, than I could have been jealous of Father. You know how I loved him . . . all I want to do is help you get started right, the way he would have done."

"I can imagine," Johnny said. Deliberately he began to undress.

"I didn't say one word to you at either of the rehearsals because—"



"You'd have made a fool out of yourself if you had." In his under-drawers he reached under his pillow for his nightshirt.

Edwin stood up, "Well, the last thing I want to do, God knows, is quarrel with you." Absently he plucked the wilted rose out of the buttonhole of Johnny's coat and crumbled it in his hands, then put it up to his face and took a deep smell of it. Johnny had climbed into bed and was lying there stiffly, his eyes and hair like black night against the white pillows. "Johnny, we might as well be friends. We're going to be bumping into each other." He stooped down and pulled out the chamber from under the bed and dropped the petals into it. Then he shoved it back and stood up. "It would break Mother's heart if she thought we couldn't get along."

Johnny stared at him silently.

Edwin leaned his elbows on the footboard of the bed and smiled down. "I'm only playing here a few weeks. Then I'm going and you're staying. But we'll be bumping into each other forever. What can I do, Johnny, so we can get along?"

The boy was several seconds deciding whether to sulk or speak. He decided to speak. "You can try leaving me alone," he said. "Not butting into my business. Letting me act my way and you act your way."

"I just wanted to help you overcome a serious—"

"Not helping me 'overcome' anything," Johnny finished. "Anything I want to overcome, I'll overcome it, anything I don't, I won't. I don't need any assistance from you!"

Edwin was silent now, thinking. "Well, will you be friends then?" he said finally.

"When?"

"If I don't—what you call butting in."

"Why shouldn't I be friends? I'm not jealous of *you*, in case you don't know it," Johnny said.

The string of memory's necklace gently broke, the clear beads rolled where they would and in them was Mother reading the clippings from California, from Chicago, from New York ("Oh, his father would be so proud," she kept saying)—about Edwin . . . a poorer model of himself, a first try, short, too light in weight, hadn't the color, hadn't the spirit—but upon the stage, with abso-

lute authority underplaying to overplay, moving like a blaze, speaking like Niagara, his voice carrying into the very street yet soft as the duvetyn cloak upon his back clasped by the great red gem against his breast—damn Edwin, damn him, that other, different Johnny, whose fault it was that there were *two* instead of just one-of-a-kind (as Johnny would have liked) in all the world! Asia, sweet Asia . . . running to put her best dress on when Edwin came home, throwing her arms around Edwin's neck, kissing him—"Neddie, you are perfectly horrid—horrid—horrid to have a *girl*. Isn't he horrid, Mother?" Asia combing her hair, putting on her little brooch. . . . Image by soap-bubble image dissolving, vanishing. . . .

"I'm not jealous of you," he repeated. "I've been willing to be friends all along."

"Well, shall we shake hands on it then, Johnny?" Edwin reached his hand out and bent forward as far as he could over the walnut bedframe.

Johnny had to raise up to make his own hand reach.

"No hard feelings?" Edwin smiled as he had smiled when he was fifteen and his little brother was ten. That was the year Johnny tattooed his initials on his left hand with India ink—J.W.B.—and Mother was so put out. She said it would be a permanent mark. It had faded a little, though, but was still plain to be seen now on the lovely long hand upon the coverlet. Father didn't like it, either.

"No hard feelings," Johnny said, and came around to smiling his most captivating smile. Why not win everybody? It was so easy. Why not win Edwin, too?

In the darkness his transcendancy shone down upon him like moonlight and he smiled with happiness. This, also! Edwin had the leading roles but two rehearsals had made him so jealous that he had to come running and try to ruin the rival who was going to put him in the shade! Resonance. Breathing. Volume. Hell.

Opening his own door, Edwin thought, Well, I tried, anyway. For Mother—and for Father's sake. But that's the last of taking a hand with him. If he learns, all right, if he doesn't learn—well, he'll just have to sink or swim.

---

# IX

*"Right so of air, my leve brother,  
Ever each air another stirreth  
More and more, and speech upbreath,  
Fill it be at the House of Fame."*

—CHAUCER

---

JOHNNY as Richmond, fencing superbly, and Edwin, who won an ovation in the title role, played Richard III that early winter in the city of Richmond. Stubbornly, Johnny acted the way he wanted. He mispronounced many words and neither drew nor sent his breath out right, badly abusing his throat. It was crude but he had a magnetic fire that compelled the audience. His was a peculiarly old-fashioned and bombastic manner of acting, much in contrast to Edwin's quiet, finished, modern style, and his older brother wondered where he could have picked it up. Johnny could have gone upon the stage with Peg Woffington and Charles Macklin, dead nearly a hundred years, and outacted them in their own language. It was noisy, it was wearing, it was absurd, but the audience warmed to him in spite of it, and soon he had reason to think that he was progressing very well indeed. He played Horatio to Edwin's Hamlet and was letter-perfect in the role, for now he learned his parts and there was nothing to complain of on that score. He came late to rehearsal more often than he ought, but that was because he didn't get to bed at a proper hour or get up when he should. Edwin let this go unreprimated as he wanted to keep on amicable terms with his young brother. It would not have helped to scold, and would only have sent Johnny into fits.

The only way to handle him was to let him go where he "listeth," never rebuke, scold, lecture or disapprove of him, never to put a straw in his path, but praise, commend and exclusively love him.

That was all you had to do with Johnny. When you learned that, he was a perfect angel, the best and most agreeable friend, lover, son, brother in the world. Edwin took this easy path to deal with Johnny because he was also an egotist, also a Booth, and because he was a great actor in dead earnest and had no time to waste in petty wayside quarrels. The time was to come when he would be too irked not to quarrel, but those days in Richmond, after the first clash, were days of friendship for the two brothers. Edwin hoped Mother would understand, and Father, too, if he happened to know it, why he had decided not to stick his finger in Johnny's pie, even if he should have and a man ought to be his brother's keeper.

It was no wonder Johnny was late to rehearsal. The wonder was that he got there at all!

Richmond liked Edwin. They stood in the aisles to see him. Richmond Society with a capital S fell over itself for Johnny. He had been a little too rich for the North, too luxurious, too overblown even in dainty boyhood, too black, too red, too white, too romantic, too—that old word again, like the monotonous ghost of King Partholan haunting his tomb—*beautiful*—or would have been all these things if the North had brought her cold eyes to bear upon him and had taken a good look. The South did, and saw in an instant that here was the boy for her, the ruthless, young, cruelhearted, sentimental, brilliant cavalier, prince incognito, sweetheart and villain. Hero-type of an olden brighter world than this, he was the lad for Virginia, Georgia, Louisiana. . . . She had languished for him, and here he was! Her arms opened wide. She invited him to balls, cotillions, supper parties. She laid down the red carpet and unfolded the canopy.

It was a trial to him that he had not money enough to buy the clothes he fancied he needed. But by spending all he had except room rent and something to eat on, for boots, linen, a cape, thick silk cravats and damask waistcoats, and borrowing Edwin's best clothes whenever possible, he managed to present both a new and dazzling appearance at each of the many functions he graced.

The young ladies who were so fortunate as to dance or play at cards or sip champagne punch or stroll upon the terrace with him on these occasions did not have to have recourse to writing him

letters with ink colored like their own heart's blood or black as their hair or purple as the osier. Yet even they wrote. Many, many ladies wrote, in fine Italian hands and other sorts, upon rich vellum or cheap rag, and their letters came in a pile to him, and said—well, they should have been ashamed, but they couldn't help themselves, poor ladies. Neither could you, if a woman and you had just seen him on the street outside the theater or inside on the stage, or at a party or riding down the street like Gawaine or Tristram on his livery stable horse. You'd have sat down in your layers-deep skirts, thrown off your scarf, grabbed your feather pen, dipped it in your china inkwell, got ink on your fingers—your waterfall hairdo slipping its moorings—and you, like all the rest, would have written as they did—what nonsense they wrote.

Johnny read the letters quite carefully. An actress friend admired the fine and gentlemanly way in which he tore all the signatures off the bottom of the last page before he read a word of what they had to say. Seeing her eyes upon him, he said, like a hero in one of Congreve's plays, "The sting lies in the tail, little one. The sting lies in the tail." She cherished this statement and used to repeat it in after years. In spite of her protruding teeth, he was kind to her, not kind as to a young woman but more as to some member of another species, perhaps a young calf, and she was grateful as long as she lived.

Indeed the South loved Johnny, and he loved her because she had the sensibility to love him. All he asked was to be loved. All he asked was not to be criticized and found fault with, all he asked was just to be King of the world. In return he would act so well and be so kind and shine so brightly. Philadelphia had no business hissing him and booing him, not taking him in, not asking him to parties, not *noticing* him, and if he hated, loathed and detested the North, well—the North had nobody but herself to blame!

Even the young Richmond blades accepted him as one of them, for his vanity worked every minute like a mill wheel turning, and kept him at it till one and all fell beneath his spell. He learned a new trick, too, to dim his beauty as you turn down a lamp, in men's company, so that their natural suspicions were lulled and they took him in. There was blazing political talk in those days when



the men got together in a corner, and Johnny with his agile and vigorous vocabulary took his part ably. Ably, not, alas, because he was a very intelligent young man (he was not) but because he was on the side of the Right.

Since his childhood he had heard some talk of Abolition and Abolitionists. The Abolitionists did not live close by, or in Maryland or Virginia for that matter, but far north, so whatever they thought or said or did was wrong, and whatever they believed was wrong. They wanted to overthrow the government and free the slaves—give every Negro a house and land and cart and horse and barrel of canary and new suit and beaver hat and God knows what else—“free” them—but it was too silly even to imagine.

Johnny had never had a thing against Negroes in his life, any more than he had had a thing against the horses, cows, sheep and pigs on The Farm, but they *belonged* to people, that was all there was to it. From boyhood, if he thought about it at all while he was so busy thinking about himself, he would have thought about it in this way: that if something *belonged* to somebody and somebody else came and tried to take his rightful property away from him (as if somebody came and tried to take Cola away from *him*, for instance), why, the fellow should get a good beating. He liked the colored help his parents hired year by year from the same masters. Old Joe wove beautiful baskets, wicker cradle baskets for the babies and harvesting baskets and ladies' sewing baskets, in the long winter evenings. He knew many stories of wonder and magic, too, and had once seen a ghost. And Althea and Harriet, one so fat and one so thin, kept the round Dutch oven always baking with bread, and the heavy pewter platters scoured and a thousand and one tasks done, while they sang untiringly the songs that the Booth children learned and sang. And Florry kept everything in repair; he could fix anything, a broken harness or a cracked bowl, or an upset stomach for that matter, for he also knew the remedy for any ailment. And Welton built shelves and put in new steps, and Auntie's boys kept the farm going . . . so there wasn't anything wrong with *Negroes*, as such. There was a great deal wrong, however, with the lunatics who wanted to set them free.

Johnny wasn't particular where he gathered his weapons for

argument, just as long as they struck home for the cause of what he considered Justice and by so doing won him the approval of his listeners. He reasoned little or nothing out for himself, having neither the time nor inclination to do so, but by cleverly pilfering a phrase here, a saying there, a remark here, and drawing upon a rich store of emotion, he was soon as respected in Richmond among the "political thinkers," "right-thinking citizens" and "patriots" as among the callower Know-Nothings at home in Bel Air. Let him attach himself to a group of disputatious men, let him casually enter a conversation whose passionate subject was slavery, republicanism, abolition or secession, and with darts picked up from a previous company or parley he could soon dazzle them.

Johnny believed all he said about What Should Be and What Was Right, at the time he said it, but absently, as he believed what Horatio said or Florizel said when he happened to be Horatio or Florizel. However, most of his ardor was bestowed as a graceful compliment to the South, in return for her graciousness to him. Having the background to be on the side of what was considered in that vicinity to be the Right, he carried her banner willingly.

Persuading with the power of the true actor, using the gift of emphasis which belongs only to the unself-conscious, unafraid of the little-used word and lavish with plundered perceptions, he trotted out a Right that awed his listeners. Under her fine array she was weak kneed and spindle shanked, but that did not matter. This argument, so pleasing to the citizens of Richmond, went like this:

"Northerners are nothing in the world but British Monarchists. They want a strong government so they can have a weak people.

"Southerners are gentlemen, scholars and true democrats. They want a weak government so they can have a strong, self-reliant people, in the true republican way.

"The North blabs about union. All they really want is disunion. They want the government to fly apart so they can remake it according to their own specifications. They don't want a democracy, they want a despotism.

"The South did not invent slavery. It was thrust upon them by the avarice of British traders. They made of it a benign institu-

tion, a blessing to the servitors and a boon to civilization.

"The North does not keep slaves only because it is not profitable to do so in a cold climate. That is why they turned the Negro loose, set him free.

"There are only about forty thousand Negroes up there, that's why.

"If there were *seven hundred thousand*, they would be singing a different tune.

"The Abolitionists are the Devil incarnate. Osawatomie Brown is a fiend. The Republicans are dangerous lunatics who want a dictatorship.

"The colored race is inferior and helpless. They need masters. They are a thousand times better off under slavery than in their own native Africa. And why a thousand times better off? Well, consider: how did they live in Africa? They lived on snakes and worms, that's how. They had no clothing at all, they ran around like dumb animals, they *were* dumb animals. Sometimes their king would order three or four thousand of them to be taken out and slaughtered as a sacrifice to some hideous god—maybe a big rock or an ugly tree. Did a master ever do that? No, never. Now listen. You take a Negro with a master and you take a Negro without a master and who's the happiest? Who is, every time? Why, the Negro without a master is the most Godforsaken creature on the face of the earth, it makes a man's heart bleed to see him. But he runs away if he gets a chance, somebody might say. All right. Why does he run away? Well, why does a sow run away or a cow run away or a horse run away? Just to run, like a dumb animal, to see what's over in the next field, not because servitude chafes him!

"Consider, too. All Christian nations have known for the past two thousand years—and for two or three millenniums before that—that the black man is an inferior being. Read your Bible! A man who says a Negro is his equal is not respectable.

"If, God forbid, through the machinations of these maniacs the black race and the white race ever mix, it's farewell to Civilization. It might just as well take a slow poison, for it will sink down to the same not-to-be-postponed ruin and dissolution.

"No greater Curse can befall Society than Mongrelism. Who can

think without a shudder of the marcescence of Mulattoism? If there is anything worse, name it.

"The Negroes and the whites are two distinct species. Read Aristotle! God made both, but He gave the first, one talent, He gave the second, ten talents. And why did He do this? Is it for us to question His Inscrutable Will? Is it for us to meddle with Divine Providence? The Lord made an ox. Can you take that ox and make an Arabian steed out of him? Try it, and see how far you get. The Negroes were set upon earth to be slaves and slaves they must be.

"And now we come to Sovereign States' Rights. Gentlemen, I wish to say—"

And so on and on. Johnny was delighted to be not only upon the side of Right but upon the Right Side as well, and Richmond, delighted, too, drew him closer and closer to her warm heart. The fathers and uncles of the lovely young ladies approved of him, their brothers and cousins and sweethearts took him into a secret society called The Knights of the Golden Circle whose main praecognitum was that they were not going to Stand For Anything. Johnny endorsed this willingly, and felt honored. He felt still more honored when he was made a member of the Richmond Grays. This was the "dude" regiment of the state militia, to whom only young men of the best families belonged, where haughty pride was a sign of high breeding, ladies—except one kind—were not "named," and Romance, that exquisite agony, stood first among the arts.

Johnny was, however, an actor by blood and he had a job at the theater. Also he had a great many invitations to the handsome family parlors of these same ladies whose appellations were so sacred. Politics, therefore, these organizations, all the to-do about the country going to the dogs, much as he might prate about it, meant very little to him. Of course he did like the uniform of the Richmond Grays very much, it was handsome and colorful, as for a palace guard in a comic opera. He liked to put it on because it became him to perfection—go to a muster, a parade or civic gathering and watch the girls' eyes kindle.

When he got leave from the theater in order to go to Asia's wedding, he was sorry he couldn't wear the uniform to Baltimore. It



might look a little odd, though, and besides, Mother might think he was in the Army and make a great fuss. He would have taken it along just so he could show it to them (Asia would go wild) but the high hat with the wonderful black cock's feathers and the strap under the chin might be pretty hard to carry. He wanted to travel light, as the cars would be crowded around the holidays, so he left it behind. He wore his large, light overcoat with deep sleeves and little swinging shoulder cape, and his low, soft hat and British kid boots, and they went wild enough over that. Asia said Mahomet would turn green with envy and Mother made him walk backward and forward and turn around and bow before she would permit him to take them off. Rosalie said she wondered how they let him leave Richmond at all! He had to laugh at them. Joseph was at home from medical school and he laughed, too. Edwin couldn't come for the wedding, he couldn't leave New York.

Asia seemed a little petulant about marrying John Clarke, the young actor, but she decided she might as well. There was so little fun at home now, and she felt blue and empty—wicked Johnny, to desert Asia—and she had no leanings for the stage. Other girls her age were already married. She was nearly twenty-one and if she sat around much longer she would wake up some fine morning to find herself an old maid! Being already betrothed to John Clarke, she decided that he would have to do.

She had received better offers, from young men of better family or more fortune or both, but there was always something wrong with the way they looked, if one remembered Johnny's face (or Edwin's so like Johnny's). Either they had impossible hair, impossible eyes, impossible noses, bad complexions, straggly mustaches or the wrong kind of teeth. If they had not—why, then they were too short, too tall, too big, too small. If their faults were not these—why, then they had unsweet breath, walked like pelicans, couldn't ride, didn't like Byron or didn't pronounce their words right. John Clarke wouldn't do either for that matter, but he came closest and Asia decided that somehow or other she would have to try to make him do, so she said yes, and set a day to marry him.

She wore, of course, a pure white dress, with a circlet of white



flowers around her head from which a white veil fell down. Johnny stood up with the couple. John Clarke unfortunately had a slight cold so that he had to use his handkerchief at frequent intervals. This rather shook his composure and whenever he tried to meet Asia's eyes and couldn't, for she never seemed to look in his direction, it was shaken still more.

The bridegroom was glad when the ceremony was over, the wedding supper eaten, and the dances begun to the pair of fiddles—gladdest of all when he could take begrudging and beautiful Asia home to the little rented house around the corner. John Clarke liked Johnny all right—after all, he was only a boy—but while he watched the brother and sister dancing a round dance together, as like as peas in a pod except for the sharp difference of maleness and femaleness, he got to thinking about Johnny in Philadelphia last spring. Johnny had ruined that boardinghouse, ruined it for John Clarke, that is, and up until then it had always been such a comfortable place. Of course, Johnny only stayed a few days, but he must have done something horribly rude to the landlady's daughter and to the maid, John Clarke thought, because after he left they were just as spiteful as could be. They thought there was a connection between himself and Johnny and they seemed to want to take their spite out on him for some unknown reason. They changed his warm quilts for thin blankets, got away with his softest pillow, left him dirty towels and stale water, and once he got such cramps after eating tomatoes that he thought it possible they had poisoned him. Whatever it was Johnny did to those poor girls, it must have been reprehensible. John Clarke felt sorry when he had to move from that once pleasant abode all because of Johnny's mischief. He thought of it now.

How well Johnny could dance, though. Whether one cared for him or not, it was the greatest delight to watch him . . . and how well Asia could dance with him. It was no wonder they danced reluctantly with everyone else and couldn't get back into step again together fast enough. They went round and round and their black eyes (not black, hazel, they only looked black) lit up the room like candles. John Clarke blew his nose, put his handkerchief away,

stuck his hand up surreptitiously to forehead and cheek and wondered if he had a fever. He thought he had and decided to soak his feet in hot water before he went to bed.

His mother had a feeling in the middle of the night that there was a light burning downstairs, and got her shawl on and went down, and sure enough there was, in the back parlor. Johnny retired when the wedding guests were gone, and yet here he was up again. His legs were bare, too, and though he had put more coals on the fire, there was every chance in the world that he might catch cold. He had got the bottle of brandy out of the cupboard and was sipping some in a glass. "What are you doing, darling?" she said, coming softly across to the fire and looking down at him. "Couldn't you sleep?"

"No," he said, smiling up at her. "So I thought I'd come down and sit by the fire a little." Rancor and heartburning had kept him awake. It was as if somebody had come and stolen a rich possession, a province he owned, and he wanted it back again because it was his, though he did not know its name. He did not know how to think or speak of it or how to tell anyone, even himself, what "lame and impotent conclusion" had got him out of bed and sent him down here. The brandy, though, after a while, like a genie, had whispered that what he had lost did not signify, so long as his own personal glory was unaltered by the loss. The genie said nothing mattered very much but that.

"Aren't you tired?" his mother asked.

"Tired? Oh, no. I just thought I'd sit here awhile."

"Johnny, tell me, darling. Are you worried about something? Because if you've got some problem on your mind, about—well, acting, or if you've got yourself into a mix-up with some young lady, or something of that sort, you can tell me, I'll help you, there's nothing that can't be straightened out." She looked at the brandy bottle. "I don't like to see you—"

"I wasn't sleepy, that's all, Mother. Too much wedding, I guess." He gazed into the fire and the clock in the next room gathered its wheels and springs for a bong, bong, bong.

"It was pretty, wasn't it? Asia looked so lovely. I wish your father

could have seen her, she's the first one of the children to get married."

Johnny seemed lost in a brown study and did not answer, so in a little while she decided to go back upstairs. "You won't stay up too long?" she said. At the door into the hall he called her back, but softly, so as not to disturb the sleepers upstairs.

"Mother?"

"What?" She came back swiftly.

"I meant to ask you," he said, "but it slipped my mind, and now I just happened to think of it again. What did Father used to take for hoarseness?"

"Hoarseness?" She looked puzzled. "Why, I don't think he took anything, Johnny. I don't believe I ever heard him say."

"But what did he do about getting hoarse? I mean, like after a performance, when a person—gets hoarse, you know."

She knitted her brows and thought. "I don't think he ever had any trouble with his throat, Johnny. At least I never heard of it. He never mentioned getting hoarse. I don't think he ever did."

"But he *must* have, sometimes. What did he do about it?"

"Do you mean like a—like having a cold or something like that?" She looked troubled.

"Getting hoarse," Johnny said irritably, "after a long performance. I do sometimes, and I am sure he did, too, and I just wanted to know what he did about it, if he had some medicine or something to take."

Again she tried hard to remember, but she had to repeat, "I never heard him mention it. But I'll tell you what I'll do. Next time I go out to Bel Air I'll ask Florry. He knows the remedy for everything and I'll tell you what he says."

She did better, she sent a bottle of evil-smelling liquid that Florry said would clear up the voice the way the sun cleared up the storm clouds. It did not taste bad, and it seemed to help him. Anyway, the hoarseness did not come often, and then only after a performance that stunned the audience. A frog in the throat wasn't much of a price to pay for all that wild applause. It went away soon. And God knew, it was nothing to be ashamed of. Quite the contrary, really. He did not try to hide it any more than Michelangelo would have tried to hide the callouses on his wondrous hands.

---

# X

*"To Drayton Basset woldst thou goe,  
Fro the place where thou dost stand?  
The next payre of gallowes thou comest unto,  
Turne in upon thy right hand."*

—OLD BALLAD

---

HE WENT home to The Farm for the summer, but it had changed greatly. He could not seem to while away the hours with the old enjoyment. He got on Cola and cried in the old way, "The Choctaws are after you! Run for your life! Run, laddie!" to start him off quickly galloping down the deserted country roads between the trees, but Johnny did not sing. He took a play with him and went out and sat on Asia's rock by the little creek, but he did not try a concert for the frogs. Anyway, they seemed all to be gone off somewhere, maybe following Asia. He thought he would write her a letter and tell her, but was too indolent to do it. (Turn and look behind you, sweet sister. Are the little brown frogs hopping behind? They have all gone from the creek by the rock.)

The old green bullfrog lived in the spring beside the house, but he croaked like an imp of Satan and Johnny would have liked to throw a boot at him when, in the bright moonlight, he eased his yearning with a serenade.

Sometimes Asia came out from Baltimore in a buggy with her husband. She wanted to take Belle out and go for a ride but Mother said she had best not. For the first time, she seemed quite a lot older than Johnny, quite changed. He showed her the wig of shimmering auburn hair he had added to his theatrical paraphernalia and told her about the girl. She was holding it in her hands, looking at it, and when he told her she threw it down hastily on

the bed as though it had burned her. "Good gracious," she said, "I should think it would *haunt* you. A dead girl's hair!"

"Well, I didn't kill her, you know," he said teasingly.

"It's horrible."

"It's beautiful. You're green with envy."

"I am not. I just couldn't stand it around."

"Well, I can," he said. "That wig is worth a lot of money. Wasn't I lucky to get the hair? I had met her only once, at that ball. I didn't realize she had so much hair or that it was so pretty, because she had it in this thick braid around her head, and kind of a puff here and a puff there, not a very stylish coiffure, though I imagine it was supposed to be. She probably copied it from a picture. It wasn't very becoming, either, too old for her. Her dress was too old for her, too, and a little too handsome, but then of course her parents are awfully rich. But it was white, so that made it all right, not vulgar or anything. She was about sixteen, maybe seventeen, with a little flat nose and big blue eyes and her mouth was rather too small, I thought, but maybe she kept it pursed all the time so it would look like that. And then she was so pink . . . a constant blush, I suppose . . . made her very attractive. I might not have paid any particular attention to her," he said, taking the wig up off the bed and smoothing it back as though from a live brow, "but for some reason she was made a great fuss over by a lot of the fellows—they crowded around and made a great fuss about getting their names on her program and all that, and I happened to notice. And then I saw her dancing and she really was very graceful and her feet were so small, with fetching little red morocco slippers laced up. Anyway, after that I went over and—"

"And took all the rest of her dances, I suppose," Asia said. "Don't handle that dead hair like that. Hair is just as much a part of a person as a—hand. It sends chills down my back."

"It doesn't feel dead at all. Here, just touch it, it feels lovely, and alive, too—"

"I've never minded just touching a *wig*, but to know that it belonged to a real person, who isn't cold in her grave—"

"Oh, she's cold all right," Johnny said. "That's been two months ago at least. If she isn't cold now, she never will be. And she wasn't



particularly a *real person*, at least not to me. She was just very attractive."

"Ladylike?" Asia asked.

"Oh, very. You should have seen her, you'd have smiled. Old-fashioned manners like from the French court. It was jolly to watch her. Anyhow . . . we danced, and I took her in to supper on my arm, and then we strolled through the greenhouse and looked at the pictures in the upstairs gallery, and when we parted I told her I would come to call on the following Sunday. I did, too, but when I got there the maid said she was very sick with some sort of fever, typhoid, I think it was. And then I didn't think much more about it until a couple of days later when their coachman came with a package for me, with this hair." He had stroked it into the arrangement he wanted and now he rested the wig against his bent left arm, lightly propping it up with his right forefinger. "There was a note from her father saying that he was fulfilling his daughter's last wish. She had wrung a deathbed promise from him, it seems, that I should have her hair, otherwise I don't imagine they would have been very anxious to part with it since she was their only daughter. Now that was an odd thing for her to think of doing, wasn't it? At first I couldn't imagine what in the world to do with it, there was so everlasting much, and I thought good heavens, it was bound to get *on* things, but then I decided it was worth having made into a wig. I'm certain to be able to use it now. The man who made it said it was the loveliest hair he ever saw."

"Did you thank the father for it?" Asia asked soberly.

"My dear Asia, I penned a flowery note and stained it with my tears. Not only that, I paid a call, and before I left they were offering me *their* condolences, instead of the other way around. I think they thought I might have wanted to marry their lovely daughter, if she had lived."

"Well, would you, do you think?"

He smiled. "I'm afraid she would have proved rather dull. But of course she would have come into money. That would make a difference." A shaft of light came in and fired the hair to a glitter against his breast. "I suspect she would have got too plump eventu-

ally." He thought about this. "Poor girl. Perhaps it was just as well. . . ."

Asia had tears in her eyes. "Johnny, she wanted you to carry that hair of hers around with you, so you would never forget her. It was the only way she could think of to be—to be united with you, supposing as she did that you loved her as she loved you. . . . Oh, it's so sad and cruel, Johnny."

"Why is it? I'm not going to forget her," he said, but his sister knew he would. Soon he could take the wig out of its box and not remember how all those sparkling tendrils had danced the quadrille and schottische, how they shadowed pink blushes and passionate glances. . . . Eventually, after a while, the hair could even be quite lost and he would not miss it. It could drown at sea and the maiden's pitiful immortality drown with it, and he not care. Asia felt suddenly cold, bereft, as though it were herself he would someday cease to remember.

He was glad to get back to Richmond and pleased when he saw the parts he would play the coming season. Again the letters showered down on him, again he tore the telltale names off their last earnest pages and again the invitations poured in. He had more and more need of his scraps and phrases about The Right, too, for now all discussions, or almost all, whether at the theater, clubroom or parlor, turned upon the big issue, whether a state whose sovereign rights were deconsecrated, a word he cherished, had not the duty to secede from the Union who had so deconsecrated them. He had to collect new sentiments for this. Everybody decided that it was not only the duty but the *bounden* duty, Johnny most vociferously of all.

In October the papers were full of the tedious old lunatic John Brown, who had already gobbled up so much news space when he did whatever it was he did at Osawatomie. He had a maggot in his brain that since nobody else would lift a finger, he would have to free the slaves in the South all by himself. For some reason he was dead set against slavery and could hardly take the trouble to earn a living, he was so anxious to get the black man out of bondage. He

had eighteen children—five by his first wife and seven sons and six daughters by his second—and you would have thought a family of that size might have kept him busy, particularly when he instructed them in theology, as he did, and virtuous deportment, and kept an account of the chastisements he had to administer to which child for what cause in a great double-entry account book, like the Head Bookkeeper in heaven. But no, it did not. Neither did his “remarkably plain wife” Mary, nor his various trades—tanning, surveying, postmastering, wool dealing, stock raising, horse breeding and chopping down trees—nor his Bible study. Nothing did. He took a notion when he was a little boy and, unaccompanied, drove a herd of cattle a hundred miles, that slavery was the most awful thing upon earth and had to be stopped. For years he had helped Negroes escape and sneak up into Canada, and you might have supposed that would have satisfied him, too. But no, it did not.

The older he grew, the bigger the maggot grew, and finally when he was an old, gray-bearded, wild-eyed Druid of a man of fifty-nine, it got to such a size that nothing would do but he had to free *all* the slaves—not just a piddling handful of runaways—*all the slaves* south of 36°30' N. latitude, and a few extra ones besides. Well, he couldn't open a gate in the night and let them all through, the way he could the neighbor's sheep if he so minded, so he figured he would get down there to them and arm them and let them battle their way to freedom themselves, with him at the helm. It was quite a big undertaking but he and some of his sons and a few other men bit it all off as though it were not going to be too big a chunk for them to chew, which, of course, it was.

For a start, they seized the arsenal at Harpers Ferry, near Charles Town, Virginia, on Sunday night, October 16, 1859. By Tuesday night, October 18th, they were almost all dead, except John Brown. He was captured and thrown into jail, as a “traitor to Virginia.” Just imagine. He was trying to start a slave rebellion! Now, wasn't that the act of a stark, raving madman? The Republicans, angry as they were at the stubborn South and all its works, thought so. The most prominent of them gave statements to the papers to that effect. Abraham Lincoln, private citizen, thought so, too. He said so. He said it was an absurd adventure. But for some reason or

other it "rocked the continent from sea to sea," like the biggest earthquake ever known.

Johnny said he knew the newspaper by heart those days before he even read it. There was nothing in it but John Brown, John Brown, John Brown. His tedious name was on everybody's lips, too, wherever one went. They held a trial for him on October 27th that lasted a week, and sentenced him to be hanged on December 2nd.

Toward the last of November, the state militia was ordered out, to go to Charles Town. That was in case Brown had an army hidden away somewhere that would march down and try to rescue him before he could be executed.

Johnny was on his way to the theater when the bell in the tower of Capitol Square started to clang. He noticed there was a hustle and bustle in the streets, too, and an astonishing number of uniforms about. He asked one young man if war had been declared. "No," the man said. "The militia is going to Charles Town to see that old John Brown gets hung."

Now Johnny recognized a fellow recruit in the Richmond Grays hurrying down the street. "Are we going, too?" he called.

The young man stopped and came over to him. "Can you come? We're all going to meet at the station. Go home and get your uniform, you've got plenty of time."

"Well, I'm playing tonight—" Johnny began.

"Oh, there won't be any *fighting*," the soldier said.

Johnny glanced quickly at him but he did not seem to have intended a slur. It was more a reassurance for himself, perhaps. He had the mamma's-boy look that needed reassurance. "Too bad there won't," Johnny said boldly. "I wish they'd put us up against a couple of battalions of Abolitionists."

"Don't I, though!"

"I think I'll come along," Johnny decided. "I'll go home and change my clothes and meet you lads at the station."

"Do that, Booth. It ought to be quite a lark."

It *was* a lark. Ten railroad cars packed as full as sardines carried them the hundred and seventy miles to Charles Town, up in the hills of Virginia, where John Brown lay in his cell, his wounds



healing just as though he were not going to die at all. Something delayed the train and they didn't pull out of the station until long past midnight but nobody minded. They were off on a holiday, high spirited, wearing their uniforms like soldiers at a masquerade. It was cold in the train but they carried plenty to drink and plenty to make them hot with excitement. It was the best sight in years they were going to see, that damned old arch-Abolitionist, the Daddy of them All, John Brown, burned at the stake. Well, of course he wasn't going to be burned but hanged. That was nearly as good, however. It ought to teach the rest of that outlaw mob of blackhearted criminals to watch their step. They had gone about as far as they were going. The South was about done with taking guff off of anybody.

Johnny joined in the talk, throwing out his impassioned phrases. Many new ones had been added to his repertoire, for the wind had veered and was blowing in a different direction. It was war talk now, talk of war, all the sentiments Johnny picked up had war, war in them. We're going to have to have a showdown, we're going to have to fight them, we're going to have to settle this thing once and for all so it will stay settled. We could whip the blackhearted cowards in a week, and we must do it. Not only our lives—our personal lives, which are relatively unimportant—are in danger, but Civilization itself totters on the brink of disaster. Everybody listened when he spoke.

He had his uniform on and had borrowed a brace of pistols and a knife at the theater. The manager was sulky and said he insisted upon a performance, but Johnny said scornfully that he had to go and do his patriotic duty. Most of the cast agreed with him and thought it admirable, they came round to pat him on the shoulder and wish him the best as though he were going to the battle front. He had also been made assistant quartermaster. A stern-faced lieutenant had come up to him in the station and said he had been made assistant quartermaster. He had no idea what duties this title would devolve upon him, but he thought he would wait and see what developed. Since nobody ever mentioned the matter again, he decided that either himself or the officer must have been drunk.



He drank a good deal of brandy during the night but remained clearheaded as usual.

The men wearied of talking, not all, but most, as the hours wore on, and started singing. The car Johnny was in was so thick with smoke you couldn't see a yard in front of you and the floor underfoot was slick with tobacco-colored expectorations. He found himself growing hoarse and decided it must be the bad air, but then he remembered that he had been talking a great deal, with a great deal of emphasis, so he quieted down and just sat there, taking a drink whenever one was passed to him.

It was tiring to sit up all night, shoving hundred-pound weights of musty heads off your shoulders, disagreeable to doze off and wake with a crick in your neck and a stubble of beard and no place to brush your teeth. Early in the morning they pulled into a station where women, trembling with the excitement of the occasion and wearing a high color to see so many strange men at once (who seemed to have put on new personalities with their uniforms, for no group of gentlemen in civilian garb had such bold eyes or used such banter), served coffee beside the steaming, snorting train—giving womanish little jumps and screams at the noises—and handed round bread-and-butter sandwiches. But before dawn the car began to smell horrible and seemed more crowded than ever, for the disarranged uniforms, the hair that had before lain down in place and now stood wild, and the beards that grew like a thicket in the night under the dim, flickering car lamps, seemed to take up more room, and the men were bigger with the bloat that sprawling sleep had brought upon the trimness of yesterday. Once during the night somebody, turning purple in the face, pried open a window and a cold wind rushed in, but that only made everybody cold and they complained loudly. Johnny shut it himself and worried about his throat.

He concluded that he didn't like soldiering so very much, if this was soldiering. In actual warfare, there were probably still worse discomforts. It was something else again when a fellow had his *Veillantif* or *Broiffort*, his page, his armorer, his cook, his good sword, his ladye's colors on his arm, his fluttering plumes, his

king. . . . Something else again if one were king oneself, like the Barbarossa or the Black Prince, and led the charge against the enemy. But this was most uncomfortable. He decided never to go to war. He could ride, he could shoot, he could fence, he boxed by elegant English rules, he was not a coward (he told himself) but he *did not* like all this herding together, with nobody knowing or caring whether you were John Wilkes Booth or a butcher boy. Besides, there was the danger to the face and form. Johnny decided once and for all that soldiering was not to be one of his sources of triumph.

It was worse at Charles Town. The Richmond Grays were assigned quarters in an abandoned tin factory and there, with some of Colonel Robert E. Lee's guard, made themselves at home. It was very cold and the building was draftier than a barn. They slept on thin straw mattresses with only one blanket apiece and had large amounts of such food as beans, cabbage soup, beef stew and sour-tasting bread. Johnny, comforted by the thought that it was not going to last forever and that in a few more days he would be back in Richmond, made the best of it. His vanity, never off duty a moment, made him agreeable, and in the old way he was soon a favorite in camp. He helped willingly with the daily cleaning tasks, but otherwise had only to stand guard as sentinel two or three times. Evenings, he took his turn with the entertainment, gave dramatic readings and was much applauded, or joined the groups who wanted to talk about the pretty pass the nation had got herself into. But he didn't like the experience, and he was glad when the last evening arrived.

It was December 1st, and the militiamen whiled away the evening hours with cards, singing, chatting, smoking or sentinel duty, and the moon came up. The townspeople kept late watch at each other's houses as though to witness a long-heralded comet roar across the skies, or as they might do for the sake of sickness, or to welcome the New Year in, drinking coffee and wearing their good clothes. Over in his jail cell old man John Brown was spending his last night on earth. His wife was there, as remarkably plain as ever or perhaps a little more so, and she sang quite sweetly, like a young girl, the hymns her husband asked for, "Blow Ye the Trumpet,

Blow," and "Oh, Lovely Appearance of Death" and "With Songs and Honors Sounding Loud." She also read Ecclesiastes to him, and Psalm 127.

Everything he had ever turned his hand to, he failed at, Old John Brown. You've known men like that, you must have known several. A born failure, the neighbors say. They don't stick to anything long, they never make any money, sometimes they drink. Worst of all is when they've got a maggot in their brain at the same time, some big, addleheaded scheme, some Principle, some Ideal, and can't just rest with their own shiftlessness. The neighbors always feel sorry for the wife of a man like that. Poor woman, they say, never knows what the next day's going to bring. They feel sorry for his children, too. Poor bunch of kids, they say, never know whether they're going to eat or go hungry, get shoes or go barefooted.

Old man John Brown's wife, that last night when she was singing and reading scripture out loud, must have thought that it was only a case of his failing again, and been maybe a little relieved that it was for the last time. He must have thought so, too, must have thought he had made the last big failure that made all his other failures look sick—and now no more chance to try again, never a ghost of a show again, and no more days to live, not even one, to set things right. He could not know his failure was a fire alarm going off in the land, starting a war, setting the match to the powder train that would edge and eat and nibble and inch till a year and four months later the whole kit and caboodle, North, South, East, West, blacks, whites, dogs, cats and Louisa May Alcott would be blown sky-high, high as the sky, the roof torn off, the walls caved in, all the chimneys toppling down.

He had grumbled once, coming away from an anti-slavery convention, "These men are all talk. What we need is action. Action!" He put them to work, all of them, the whole nation, for four long years and two thousand two hundred and sixty-one battles, shooting and stabbing and killing and burying and singing and dying and going mad and lying in prison and escaping, raping, gaping, marching through Georgia to the sea . . . and finally he set the Negroes free, scared of freedom like an unaccustomed weather of starfall and

snow. He lit the match that started the blaze that burned down the shed that burned down the house that set them freer than a flock of crows!

He didn't know a thing about it, though, that night, and thought differently. He thought it was just one more failure. Oh, he wrote letters to people and said, "As I believe most firmly that God reigns, I cannot believe that anything I have done, suffered, or may yet suffer, will be lost to the cause of Humanity," but that was to save a little self-respect, a little face, at the last minute, and Ecclesiastes hit the nail on the head best of all, saying "I have seen all the works that are done under the sun; and, behold, all is vanity and vexation of spirit."

John Brown was used to all the failure and loss that had started long ago with the yellow marble the Indian boy gave him. He loved that marble, it was as beautiful as the rare things mentioned in the Bible, but he lost it and could never find it again. Once when he was a grown man of twenty-seven he dreamed he found it in its hiding place under a blueberry bush where it had been for twenty years and it was as beautiful as ever! And then he had a little bobtail squirrel, and that had got lost; it had run off to the woods, though he had tamed it and it would eat out of his hand. He always looked for it to come back. And then he had a ewe lamb, and it died. Thoreau once wrote, "I long ago lost a hound, a bay horse, and a turtle-dove, and am still on their trail. Many are the travellers I have spoken to concerning them, describing their tracks and what calls they answered to. I have met one or two who had heard the hound, and the tramp of the horse, and even seen the dove disappear behind a cloud, and they seemed as anxious to recover them as if they had lost them themselves." His yellow marble, his busy squirrel, his soft ewe, his hound, his horse, his turtledove—for yes, he had lost these too, all gone, all gone. Now he had nothing more to lose, only his life. It did not seem much, and was not much, but it was all the life he had.

Johnny was pleased to see what a fair day broke for the hanging and for his journey back to Richmond. With the rest of the Richmond Grays he was leaving in the early afternoon and would be in



his own deep bed before the next morning. It seemed nonsense to be up at dawn when the execution was not to take place before eleven, but up they all were, and had their breakfasts, before seven o'clock. Then the men merely killed time, not the way they had last night, but strolling aimlessly about the town or around their quarters, or they tired of that and sat about in groups, talking their never-palling politics, smoking and spitting. They talked about John Brown, too, and wondered how it would feel to wake up and know that this was the day you were going to die. Somebody repeated the words he spoke when he knew he was going to have to surrender the arsenal, when the jig was up and they had him over a barrel. He was supposed to have called out, "Well, my brave boys, you can prepare a stretcher for me!" Johnny rather liked the sound of that, and when he meandered on and joined the next little group, sunning themselves on a log, he repeated it, and although there was nothing much to it he made it into quite a dramatic story. When he got to the old man's words, "Well, my brave boys, you can prepare a stretcher for me!" he gave them such meaning and pathos that it was like a scene out of Shakespeare.

His wife had brought them, and when old man John Brown stepped out on the porch of the jail in the cold sunlight he had on his good black broadcloth clothes. The suit was old, of course, he had bought it many years before, but Mary brushed it and sponged it and brushed it again, so he would look decent at his hanging and in his coffin later on. It was a little too big for him now, quite a lot too big, though it had once fitted like a glove. He had a yellowed linen shirt on, also his best, a black string tie, gray wool stockings and low black shoes. When he came out he blinked his eyes at the light. The soldiers behind him with guns and bayonets did not hurry him and he stood for a moment looking down at the two lines of soldiers at attention along either side of the long gravel walk. They looked straight before their eyes, or seemed to, like men in the sulks. This may have been pride in their unaccustomed duties, but they were angry, too, and few indeed had soft enough hearts to cast him a glance of pity.

He had thought they would be afraid to come but on either side



of the yard, a safe distance from the soldiers in their blue tunics and black hats, uneasy Negro men and women stood, some with babies in their arms and their older ones hugging their knees, and watched the proceedings with solemn eyes. John Brown wanted to make some gesture to them to tell them to take heart, keep hope, but his arms were tied behind his back and he could not wave to them. He could not force himself to smile, either, and then, upon consideration, it seemed perhaps better not to smile or wave, in case it should make them cry or cause some outbreak and snap the sulky soldiers' thin-worn patience.

It was foolhardy of the barefooted young Negro woman in the yellow waist to slip over so close to the line of armed men, but here she came with her pop-eyed, woolly-headed little boy in her arms.

She said, "Pardon me, sir," and "Pardon me, if you please, sir," in a soft and polite voice and, almost without thinking, two of them stepped a little aside and let her through. When the muttering began along the line they were sorry they had let her through, and one of them called out, "Here, Auntie, you get back where you belong," but she didn't go, she just went straight to the rough wooden steps and stood there by the railing. The Captain was close by, and he didn't say anything or make her get back, so the muttering stopped. It started again when John Brown came down the steps and stopped on the second stair from the bottom. He looked fixedly and sadly at the woman as though to apologize, and she as though to say there was no need to apologize but only to bless, held her little boy out. He was afraid and sucked his lower lip in and his pop-eyes began to glitter with tears, and he wriggled and pulled his neck in and tried to draw back, but his mother held him out and pushed him as close as she could to Old John Brown, and the arch-Abolitionist, The Daddy of Them All, bent his head and said to the baby, *There's nothing to be afraid of*, and kissed his hard baby cheek that was wet now with tears. The muttering stopped again when he came on down and started proudly up the gravel walk between the tall guns to the cart in which he would ride with his own coffin to the foot of the gallows.

They seemed very high to Johnny, as high as the scaffolding for a two-story house, but he had never seen a hanging before and so

could not judge if this was how they generally looked. He had had plenty of time to shave and spruce himself up, not for the spectacle mainly but for the trip back to Richmond in the afternoon. The Richmond Grays and the guard of Robert E. Lee having, it was decided, the noblest bearing, they were stationed in an exactly drawn-up square around the scaffold under the command of the godly Colonel himself. When Johnny saw him, he at once straightened his shoulders still more, and lifted his chin still higher, for nowhere out of Sparta was there a loftier bearing than this soldier's own. His face was something to marvel at, too, and Johnny was struck enough by its classic beauty to mark it well.

There were several men on the gallows and it was hard to get a good look at Old John Brown himself. He looked neat and clean, even his gray beard and long gray hair that fluttered in the wind looked washed and clean. They did not hurry him. While they made the last preparations he stood looking far, far away to the mountains of the Blue Ridge. Johnny did not hear him say, "This is a beautiful country. I have not cast my eyes over it before," but saw his lips move when he said it to a man close by. He did not hear him say, "I am ready at any time, but do not keep me needlessly waiting," though his lips moved again a few minutes later.

When they put the thick rope around his neck, with the knot half as long as the man's arm, and pulled it tight but not too tight, Johnny began to get a terrible sickness in his stomach and a roaring in his ears. He got dizzy, too. His mouth was as dry as a bone, he stuck his dry tongue out and tried to lick his dry lips. They felt cold and numb, the tip of his nose felt numb, cold sweat began to run down from his armpits, his cold hands got so slick and wet with cold sweat he could hardly hold his gun. He gritted his teeth and wondered how long he could stand without falling, and watched, growing sicker and sicker, while the signal was given, the trap fell, the rope played out faster and faster and snapped up short, and John Brown jerked, jerked and then swung there, swung and swung like a heavy pendulum. Then stopped, with his neck craned away over on one side and his face . . .

Johnny whispered to his neighbor, "I'm sorry, I'm ill, I'm very ill—" and his neighbor whispered back, "You'll be all right, don't

look, shut your eyes, you'll be all right in a minute, buck up, I'll get you a drink in a minute—" And somehow he stood there but he didn't look, while the memory of failure went out of the strange-colored swinging thing in black broadcloth, and the memory of what went and went and didn't come back, until it was as quiet as a statue on a pedestal of air.

The drink fixed him up, but Johnny was still squeamish on the train, and back in Richmond he went right to bed without eating a bite.

---

# XI

*"He hath marks about him plenty:  
You shall know him among twenty!"*

—BEN JONSON

---

HE DID not care particularly about attending Edwin's wedding but Mother wrote and thought that one member, at least, of the family should be there. He would be pleased to see New York, however, and when the season closed in Richmond he went north.

Three days after the Fourth of July the wedding was held in the parlor of a minister, and Johnny and another actor, Adam Badeau, stood up with the happy couple. They *were* happy, though Johnny thought the bride a somewhat drab girl, not at all what one would imagine for Edwin. On second thought, however, maybe she was exactly what one *would* imagine. It was plain to be seen that she was a born lady, although she was an actress whom Edwin had met in the theater, Mary Devlin by name. She was less than twenty, Johnny's own age, but very mature in behavior, and pious, with her hair parted in the middle and brought down severely on both sides. Her dress was a sober gray silk and she did not seem very bride-like. She plainly adored Edwin and he adored her, but Johnny did not envy either one. There weren't two mouthfuls to her, and besides, her lips were always trembling as though she might be going to cry. She was the last girl in the world you would fancy as an actress, although she was considered very promising. (She died a little over two years later. . . . Edwin was away from her when she fell into her last sickness and did not know of it, only that she appeared to him in a vision at the moment of her death, begging him to come to her. He hurried home to find her dead. When Johnny heard the story, he believed it implicitly, as the whole episode fitted her sphery personality to a T.)

At the wedding supper for a few friends he found someone much more to his liking than new little Mrs. Edwin Booth, and before the evening was over he was calling her Isis, a nickname which pleased her tremendously, and she was calling him Johnny and they were drinking their champagne out of each other's glasses. Her husband, a theater owner, was not with her.

In fact, Isis was much alone and Johnny took it upon himself to keep her company in the days following, although she was a little too tall for his taste—as tall as Johnny himself—and maybe thirty or older. She wore Paris dresses, tight Paris shoes and gloves, Paris unmentionables, clocked Paris hosiery and Paris hats constructed like an edifice as by an architect. She also wore Paris scents, pink Paris pastes and pearly powders, Paris necklaces, and she owned something else from Paris, too, of pure, solid gold, that had *ruat caelum* (let the heavens fall) engraved upon it. She was very proud that she had no children, as though it were a talent of some sort, like playing the ophicleide, as perhaps it was, and also of her many possessions from Paris—there turned out to be more and more. She had never been to Paris herself or was ever likely to go, having a great fear of the water and drowning.

She was kind, oh, very kind, to Johnny, and had many occasions to be, during his stay in the city. With her or alone he went around and saw the sights, went to the picture galleries and was conducted through Barnum's American Museum. Isis laughed at him and said that for a young man as hard to impress as he was, she was surprised that he should be so fascinated by a mere little midget like Tom Thumb. He was, though. He marveled that so much *conceit* could be encompassed in so small a scope. "He just stands up there on the stage like Conceit personified," he said. "I want to die laughing."

"Well, why shouldn't he be conceited?" Isis said.

"Good God, why should he?"

"Because he's the one and only," she said. "Absolutely *one of a kind*, nobody else like him in the world. Anybody who knows he is absolutely one of a kind always acts like that. It isn't conceit, exactly, either, it's just knowing that."

Greatly aware of his own insularity he stared down into the



brandy in his glass, shook it gently. "But, good God," he said, "that insufferable little midget!"

"Take you, Johnny," she said. "You *know*, Johnny."

"Know what?" he asked, looking up.

"How it feels to—to be someone who is absolutely one of a kind."

He thought of Edwin, resentfully.

Yes, Isis was a beguiling woman, and at first, amid all her Paris things, and because of her size and shape and the odd peach color of her hair, Johnny thought she was going to be quite different from the others, but it turned out she was not. She began to pout and then she began to cry and then she began to want him forever, and worst of all, after he went away, first to The Farm and then down into Georgia where he had an engagement, she began writing him long letters. These continued as she saw that he was not coming back to her to sniff a Paris perfume, no matter how delicate, to unwind the scarf of a Paris dress from around her neck or to press his head upon a Paris pillowcase. Worse than a schoolgirl in first infatuation, she pleaded and wept, but it was over. He wrote her plainly upon the matter, and then did not write again, but she kept on, although as time passed the letters got fewer and farther between, like the last gasps of dying Heloise. She would be silent, and then something would remind her, and with purple ink as thick as paint she would write one last time. . . . (It was, in fact, a letter from Isis that tumbled out of Johnny's overcoat pocket in the parlor of Dr. Mudd, where he went off and left it after his first visit. He never knew what became of it and did not care. It was this letter Mrs. Mudd perused, reddening—poor Isis had written it by the light of the full moon—and hastened to carry out and burn in the kitchen stove.)

Johnny went from The Farm to Columbus, Georgia, when the season opened that fall, to play Hamlet. He got there in time, but he did not appear in the role for several weeks and then had a slight limp. Strangely enough, he was wounded, and not in a duel. The night the play was to open he sat in his dressing room in the handsome doublet, hose and large jeweled chain inherited from his father, his hair brushed back from his forehead and his eyes already

taking on the immemorial melancholy, talking to a fellow actor.

In at the door walked another member of the cast, not a real actor but a lawyer who thought he would try acting instead of law, with a gun in his hands. His name was Canning, and he knew a hack from a handsaw, but he thought he would stage a holdup as a joke to amuse everybody while waiting for the curtain to go up. The gun was, of course, assumed not to be loaded, but it went off and shot Johnny (who had coldly got up and turned his back upon the bandit and was looking into the glass) in his left buttock with a real bullet. This so enraged him that he looked about for a knife to stab the man, but the alarmed cast gathering round and the man not fleeing but standing his ground like the most ashamed of mortals, he got back his senses and decided it would look more magnanimous to forgive his assailant and laugh off his wound like a hero. He did, but not for long, as he soon fainted and had to be carried to his room. They probed for the bullet but it was never found. Like Arthur fallen low he stayed in his bed for several days, holding court there, and later out on the veranda. He could not play, of course. Everybody petted him and tried to help him while away the hours, Canning most faithfully of all, until Johnny grew quite fond of him.

He would not, under the circumstances, have minded having his vacation prolonged indefinitely, had not a plan taken shape that made him eager to get back to work. He was going to become a star! He read a story in the daily newspaper that Edwin had got five thousand dollars as his part of the profits for appearing in a Boston theater for four weeks. That was *wages*, and not so much because Edwin was worth his hire, Johnny decided, but because he was a star. Therefore he resolved to be a star himself and wondered how he had not thought of it before.

In those days it was a system, the star system. An actor became a star upon his own volition. He traveled from theater to theater, where he played a few days or weeks supported by the regular or "stock" actors who stayed put and didn't travel. He had to have an agent who made his engagements for him, went on ahead and sang his praises, and begged, borrowed or stole as much newspaper or other advertising space as possible to get his employer's name, looks,

talents and foibles, if they were charming and printable, before the public. The star system was then in its ascendancy and Johnny was sorry he had not got into it right away. When he told Canning about his plan, the lawyer was so enthusiastic and seemed to know so exactly how to go about it that Johnny hired him as his agent then and there.

Canning got started at once, and as soon as Johnny finished his engagement in Columbus, Georgia, he went—with only a twinge in his backside now and then and ever so slight a limp—to Montgomery, Alabama, this time as “our country’s rising young tragedian, J. Wilkes Booth,” to play his father’s great role, Richard III. He was a huge success and was not hoarse the first or second nights after the performance, but the third night he was. He didn’t wonder at all, anyone must see he had played like an angel, but it was rather annoying, particularly since his throat pained him a little, too. But that was only natural. He drank quite a lot of brandy and that cleared his voice up fine. He had been going to write to Mother and ask her to have Florry make up some more of that remedy, but then he decided he wouldn’t really have to, the brandy served as well as anything. However, a week later he did write and ask her, since it was just as well to have some on hand.

Successful as he was in Montgomery, Canning was having trouble getting his star more southern engagements. Johnny didn’t want to go north, as Philadelphia’s snub still rankled, but the South was in too much of a turmoil for a theatrical manager to make plans very far ahead.

It was just before the Christmas holidays in 1860, Lincoln was elected and going to be inaugurated in March, none of the problems confronting the two sides to the coin called Union looked as if it was ever going to be settled and people felt as if they were sitting out on a very short limb with a very long drop beneath.

Down in Georgia and Alabama property was put up for sale “before the country goes to the dogs.” Men wanted to fight a war, they were itching for it, they wanted to get it over with. Whatever else could be postponed, was postponed, while they waited for the bugles to blow. If a house had to be painted, the owner said, “We’ll wait and see what happens.” If a horse ought to be bought, an

orchard planted, a fresh batch of calico got in at the store, it was the same. "We'll hold off a while and see what happens." Men lost interest in their work, they got together in anxious knots whenever they could, as though they had a hunch they were going to have to be together for a long, bitter time and wanted to get the feel of it, how it would seem without women. Children hated school worse than ever, and teachers grew lax, for what was the use of long division and past participles if there was going to be a war? Boys played hooky oftener and were let off easier because "everything is so up in the air anyway." Women started wondering what in God's name *they* would do if war came and got so on edge they weren't fit to be spoken to. Young girls, though they still riveted their monograms to sheets and napkins so they would never come out, did it more and more desultorily. The least little noise, a dog-fight, a cart rumbling down the street or a boy rolling a hoop, caused them to run to the window and stick their heads far out to see if it had come at last. Quilting bees, taffy pulls, spelldowns, dancing and play parties, sociables and church suppers were put off till the time "this all blows over." Faraway war sent its shadow ahead, it blued, purpled and blackened the sky while even the wind stopped blowing . . . under it, the skirts and shawls that had fluttered hung straight down, hair becalmed, eyes hushed, love tarried, birds sank down into ruffled feathers . . . and in the strange light, all waited and waited.

Canning sent his feelers out but the theater owners and stage managers declined the services of this "rising young tragedian" with regret. "We do not wish to commit ourselves until whatever is going to happen, happens," they said. "We shall have to bide our time and see."

He said there was no use to beat their heads against a stone wall. If Johnny wanted to act and keep on acting he would have to go up north, Canning said. "They're all keyed up, too, up there, but a Yankee will keep on making a dollar as long as he can. Those Northerners are going to keep the streets clean and the ashes out and the prices high and the shows running till the last dog's hung. So that's where we'll have to go, that's where you'll have to wind up,



Johnny, if you want engagements. Unless you take a notion you want to stay and fight," he added doubtfully.

"There's no war yet," Johnny said. "Who would I fight?" He laughed.

"Nobody so far," Canning said, "but that's because everybody around here agrees with you and you agree with them, but there's going to be a war, Johnny. And I get kind of worried about you. If you start spouting some of that secesh talk up north like you've been spouting it down here, you're liable to get your hair parted. I've heard you say things that would get you laid out colder than a mackerel if you said them up there to the wrong people. And the biggest majority of them up there *are* the wrong people, you want to remember. I get leery when I think of it. Maybe I just better go on up by myself and you stay around here."

"For thirty or forty dollars a week," Johnny said scornfully. "I can see myself! And Edwin up north making five thousand dollars a month! I can just see myself. Do you think I'm crazy?"

"Well, but you're a born Southerner, Johnny, and your sentiments run along the same lines as all the—"

"My sentiments lie where I can get some little return for my—sacrifices," Johnny said, putting a hand to his throat. "Where I can play the parts that suit me, before a proper audience, and get a proper return for it. Go ahead and get the ball rolling up north."

"Rochester, for instance?" Canning asked slowly.

"Certainly, Rochester. Why not Rochester?"

"New York?"

He thought of Isis, but she could be avoided. "Certainly."

"Albany?"

"All of them, damn it. Wherever we can get a proper house and a—proper return."

"I know, Johnny, but how about all this secesh talk?" Canning was worried. "All you say about the Union and all that? You haven't been up there lately, Johnny. You don't know how keyed up they all are, just like everybody down around here, only on the other side. They're ready to break loose, just like these fellows are. You're liable to say something and stir up some trouble, and the



first thing you know you're liable to wake up some morning and find yourself dead."

"You don't have to worry about me," Johnny said, going over to the brandy bottle on the dresser and pouring out two drinks. He came back and handed one to the troubled agent and seated himself with the other on the wide window ledge, looping back the curtain so he could look out at the starry sky. "I'm not a blind fool," he said. "I know when to talk and when—not to."

At Rochester he was a sensational Richard and got what even he admitted was a "proper return," but an accident to his Richmond rather spoiled things, at least for one performance. His sword snapped and the point of it flew over and cut his fellow actor just over the eye. He bled alarmingly and from the stir made backstage you would have thought Johnny had cut the man's head off. But it turned out that there was no great harm done, though Richmond had to have four stitches taken and some fear was expressed that the scar would show.

At Albany he played Romeo, and if he had not had such a grudge against the North to start with, loathing her weather, architecture, speech, clothing and manners, he must surely have weakened to her then and let bygones be bygones. For Albany took him up the way New York took up Jenny Lind. It was not the custom of the Northerners to look upon actors as people one *invited*, no matter how greatly one admired them. His audiences went mad over him, attended all his performances and discussed his interpretations. Women wrote him extravagant notes, bought his photographs and saved his programs, men copied his clothes, his haircut and the droop to his mustache, but it never entered anybody's head to invite him to a ball, supper or to join a club. He was a player, a public entertainer, and it would have been like taking up with a race horse, a tightrope walker or a lady dancer. It was so impossible that it simply never entered anybody's mind. If it had, the poor in their humbleness would not have dared, the rich in their haughtiness would have thought it *recherché*. The South had a different attitude.

Johnny was never, therefore, to lose his grudge against the North,

but they applauded him. He liked the sound of that and gave them all he had to make them do it. Every time the house went wild he felt bitterly triumphant, as though he had his heel on the neck of an enemy. For that, he was willing to grow hoarse six nights a week, but of course it didn't cost any such price as that. His Romeo gave the ladies insomnia and had them sugaring their eggs and salting their coffee for days. His Juliet did not have to act the part, though she was married, incorruptible and not pretty. It came out in the papers that he was the handsomest actor on the American stage, but this was disputed by many treble voices who proclaimed him to be the handsomest man alive. When the idol, playing Pescara in *The Apostate*, had the misfortune to fall upon his dagger, wounding himself severely in his right axilla, and the reports came out, his admirers were all of a tremble until they found out that the axilla was only the armpit, not some mysterious vital part, and that he was certain to recover. Again he was indisposed and had to stay at home for several days, not confined to bed, but weak because of an infection in his wound, enough to give him a slight fever, and loss of blood.

He was bored and irritable, though he got stacks of mail, flowers and other good things, and he thought the hotel dismally ugly. He got into an occasional discussion with fellow actors or other guests and for the first time heard the Northern side of the big argument. "To him who is already convinced . . . everything is ground for conviction," however. These phrases and sentences, to say nothing of the ideas behind them, he let go in one ear and out the other. He did not have to glean these in order to shine in Social Company, for here there was no Social Company. Since he would not use them himself, he considered them idiotic and based upon false premises. The North was wrong from beginning to end. He decided, and was not long in deciding, either, to keep his store of well-memorized, slave state beliefs intact, not to change them in the least. Canning worried, but Johnny had a way of sizing up his man at a glance. He talked, of course, all the Southern slogans were trotted out to alarm, astonish and anger his listeners, and he was not long in becoming known as a dyed-in-the-wool secesh—but he picked his time

and place; he knew pretty well with whom he spoke and he was careful. When there was real danger he kept silent or changed the talk to other lines. He didn't get his hair parted or wake up some morning dead.

Canning brought him books and periodicals but he seemed to have lost the taste for reading, as grownups sometimes lose the taste for sweets they had as children. He was never to get it back again. He bitterly complained of the slow hours until he started in pursuit of a girl! This astounded Canning somewhat more than if Johnny had suddenly begun to study for the priesthood, for he had never done such a thing before. Now he took it up with great enthusiasm and found it to be an exhilarating sport, like trying to catch a concolor gibbon in a dense forest.

She lived at the hotel, too, her name was Henrietta Irving, and she herself was an actress playing with the other stock company in town. Bored Johnny, with a great, thick bandage under and over his arm and his coat worn over one shoulder like a toreador's cape, saw her and began idly to admire her. She had insubstantial greenish brown hair combed back from a beautiful forehead, black eyebrows, long eyelashes and lovely dark eyes. Her teeth were good, her chin too small and she had nice feet and hands. Her clothes had an air that Johnny liked; they were contrived, fanciful and as if for the theater rather than for actual wear. He assumed she must be quite young, and she was; passionate, and she was; rather odd, and she was. It was not difficult to make her acquaintance, hold conversation with her, have supper with her in his rooms and—kiss her.

But then the fun began, for Miss Henrietta Irving, taught in the ways of virtue by a sainted mother recently dead, could not be led, enticed or pushed off the narrow path of virtue. Unconquered, she went from his room with sad eyes and dragging step, and Johnny was left in astonishment. When this happened again and again he began to be excited and interested. It seemed clever and charming of her to dance on ahead and flit from leaf to leaf, and not be caught, and he decided she must be a great treasure, a tooth of The Three Grey Ones at last, that gave its possessor power to walk over water. Warming to the chase, he laid careful snares, set traps—and

she always got away. It was the most delightful thing in the world, particularly since she fell madly in love with him in no time at all.

"My strength is as the strength of ten, because my heart is pure," he remembered from his childhood, and her strength *was* as the strength of ten. The contest went on and on while the hours scampered. Canning could have brought puzzles and games, the most ingenious made, and nothing would have been a better diversion for the tedious days. They came to an end, for his wound was healed and he could go back to the theater, but he was still diverted, still setting snares for Henrietta Irving.

There was a big to-do in Albany that afternoon, when Johnny stepped out of his hotel and started for the theater to rehearsal. The sidewalks were crowded with people, whole families were in town together, soldiers seemed to be everywhere, and so many wagons, carts and buggies clogged the streets it was as if the whole population had set out at once to escape the Black Plague and had to go down Main Street to do it. He was going to ask someone what it all meant, but then he remembered. Abraham Lincoln was going through on his way from Springfield to Washington, to be made President. It was February 18th. March 4th was the big day of the Inauguration and Lincoln wanted to be there in plenty of time.

Johnny decided he would follow the crowds and see if he could catch a glimpse of the next President, too. He wondered if it were possible he was the ugly, ridiculous fellow the pictures and cartoons made him out to be. He went along—and saw.

The pictures and cartoons lied. Johnny saw him, heard him say a few words from a platform, got a good look at him. He got a good look at all the people standing there listening, too, saw how Lincoln had them right where he wanted them. He could pull them around by the nose, anywhere, any direction, and they would follow. He was a dangerous man, not ugly. Not ludicrous. Very dangerous. Johnny felt a slow anger rising in him as he watched the hated Unionist faces staring upward, watched the very dangerous, very original man they yearned to and exalted.

This, then, was power, Johnny's first glimpse of it.

What was an actor? What was he? A man who acts upon the stage. But if he told thirty million people to *turn right*, would they



slowly and surely and every one turn right? If he told them to *turn left*, would they slowly and surely and every one do it? For the first time it came to him what power was, influence was, and all that he had wished and wanted before seemed like the toys of childhood. An actor was not even himself when seen and applauded, but somebody else, three hundred years dead or not yet born, a man, a great man, a wise man, a wicked man, but never himself, preponderant. This man, Abraham Lincoln, was *himself* and that was all he needed to be. Angrier and angrier Johnny grew, as though the man had done him a great wrong, and Edwin piddled away to nothing as thief, as rival in the depths of his mind, the great actor Edwin Forrest piddled away, all past envies and jealousies, past hatreds, ran together, boiled together in double double toiling troubling bubbling hatred for the biggest man he ever saw out of history, with the inestimable gift of power, who knew he had it, used it, knew he was using it and knew why.

"If ever a man deserved hanging, it's that man," he said at the theater.

"But why, Booth? What's he done, only to be elected President?" they asked.

"Because he's got the people hypnotized," Johnny said. "You mark my words. He'll make a dictator of himself yet."

"Oh, no, he won't. Why should he?"

"You wait and see."

He played Pescara that night in *The Apostate*. He was quite hoarse afterward and took some of Florry's remedy. His audience worshiped the ground he walked on. But when he was reading the notices next day, he thought, If I said to thirty million people *turn right*, they'd laugh at me. If I said *turn left*, they'd say I was crazy. But there was a man in the country who could do it, and what was the size of anybody else beside the size of him? The size of Tom Thumb! He saw prancing Tom Thumb, in preposterous conceit, and the thought was like an insult hurled, a nasty insult spat at him which he was powerless to avenge.

When war broke out it was not really a surprise to anybody. When the black cloud bursts and lets down sheets of rain and hail, it astonishes him alone who expected cock's feathers and spinels.



Fort Sumter was like Tuesday following Monday, its fall on April 13th like night after day. When Lincoln called out the state militia, and summoned a special session of Congress, it seemed only natural. When Virginia seceded, the Federals abandoned Harpers Ferry, Lincoln proclaimed a blockade of the Confederate states from South Carolina to Texas, the Sixth Massachusetts arrived in Washington ready for business; it was all natural, war was natural. Like anything else begotten that gets through the time of gestation, it was merely born. Like anything else begotten and born, it would die. Not for some time, of course, but eventually. In the meantime, it was nothing to marvel at, not as if the sun went up in smoke or the moon froze over, not for the living. The dead may have thought differently, but nobody heard them say.

Having more to lose and more to gain, the South turned topsy-turvy in her effort to get ready for the fray. But in the North, as Canning had predicted, things went on much as usual. Dreams changed, aims altered, but the shows kept running, everything kept running. Once tried on for size and found to fit, the war settled down on the back of the North as familiarly as a coat.

Johnny's engagement ran on, and for weeks, until long after spring had come, he had his rare diversion with *The Maiden*. Already skilled, he gained more skill, already subtle, he became more subtle, but the little, trembling chalice stayed up ahead, stayed out of reach . . . and the farther ahead, the lovelier.

When the day came, the night, that she did not, when the time came that she was snared and trapped, when he lifted out his prize and carried her to the light and saw her colors fading, going dim, like a sea flower dimming, rubescence going gray, opalescence going gray, cerulescence going gray, under his eyes and in his hands, he could have wept with vexation. Witch flower, witch fire, treasure? Walk upon water? He felt cheated and cross. The game was entirely spoiled.

The snare was not of his devising but her own, her love for him, and all the tears that all the ladies Johnny had ever known had shed, were like a drop in the bucket beside hers. How they poured down! And yet Johnny was gentlemanly to her. He did not tell her how vexed he was and how glad he was going to be when

the season was over and he could get back to Baltimore. But somehow she knew it, and as the tedious days went on she cried harder and harder. And why? It turned out that this bird with the clipped wings that could lift no higher than his cold heart, wanted him to marry her!

He was astonished. He said no.

He asked Canning, "Tell me, Canning. Why do they cry so much?"

"It's their tune," Canning said. "Why does the owl hoot? Why does the cat meow?"

"It's a damned poor tune," Johnny said. "If I ever meet a woman who doesn't cry, I think I'm going to get pretty damned friendly."

"Oh, she'll cry," Canning said, "sooner or later. And by the way, Johnny, now that we're on the subject, if you don't mind my asking—what are you going to do about Henrietta Irving? She stopped me in the hall last night and she wants—"

"Do about her?" Johnny said. "Why, nothing."

But Miss Henrietta Irving, the sodden, motherless child lying in the ditch beneath the narrow path . . . who was young, passionate and odd . . . was going to do something about him.

She was going to kill him!

He did not much like it that she was in his room when he came home, but at least her eyes were dry. He said, "Hello, Henrietta," and decided that all one could do was to make the best of things. His engagement had only two more weeks to run and then he was going down to Baltimore. His hat he had taken off at once when he saw he had company and now he got out of his coat as well and tossed both over the foot of the bed. Henrietta was sitting in a chair by the window. She had a black dress on and a black lace shawl wrapped around her shoulders. Her color was not good and her bones had started showing. She smiled.

"Did the show go well?" she said.

He thought about remaining on his feet, to give her a gentle hint, but then decided to take a seat on the side of the bed. He made as if to begin to yawn, smothered the beginning of this. "As well as usual."

"Did you take a lot of curtain calls?"

"Eight or nine."

"Everybody says you're so wonderful, Johnny."

He laughed. "I *am* wonderful."

"No, but, really."

"Really." He looked at the brandy on the dresser. "Your show go all right?"

"I stayed home tonight," she said. "I wasn't there."

Johnny got up and walked over to the dresser. He looked at her and she shook her head, so he filled only one glass. He carried it back to his seat on the side of the bed and took a sip.

"You're awfully late coming home. It's nearly one o'clock," she said.

He saw that in spite of her smile she was going to cry. She was all set. "Good God, Henrietta," he said, "if I ever meet a woman who doesn't *cry*—"

She pressed her lips together and the tears that had gathered spilled over and rolled down her cheeks. "Oh, they'll all cry," she said. "They'll all cry, and cry and cry, till the very last one."

He swallowed the brandy and stood up. "I don't want to be rude—" he said.

She got up swiftly from the chair and came over to him, put her arms around him. "I want to go with you to Baltimore," she said, laying her head against his chest. "Wherever you go, I want to go with you. What I said about marrying—Johnny, I don't care now, really, I don't care about anything. All I care about is for you not to leave me, not to go away and leave me behind—"

It was uncomfortable, with the empty glass in his hand, to stand there and have her clutching him like that. He pushed her away as gently as he could and went over—and here she was again, throwing her arms around him. "Please, Johnny, please—please, darling, please—"

She felt very hot, her tears felt hot against his hand put up to ward her off, her face gave off heat, her hair even, her thin, greenish-brown hair.

"I can't take you to Baltimore," he said. "You should go back now and go to bed. It's late, Henrietta."

"Johnny." She was limp against him, sobbing. It was strange how

much heat she gave off, what a dead, dull weight she felt. "Johnny?"

"What?"

"Or anywhere, Johnny?"

"What do you mean 'or anywhere'?"

"You can't take me anywhere, ever?"

"Henrietta, listen—"

She raised her head up and looked at him. A fountain troubled—muddy, ill seeming, thick, bereft of beauty—he tried to remember the words. How did they go? And while 'tis so—no man will dare—no, deign—no man will deign to touch—one drop of it. Good God, if he ever got himself into anything like this again—"Henrietta, if you could see yourself you'd be ashamed—Henrietta, listen."

She put her left arm up around his neck, made him bend his stiff neck, dragged his head down to her crumpled, crying face, kissed him, radiating heat like a shovelful of hot coals, and with her right hand, like a wronged girl in a bad, sad play, she reached under her lace shawl, pulled out the knife and—stabbed him.

Well, not really. She just missed. He seemed to know, swift as her movements were, something must have told him, a glitter, perhaps. He shoved her off and jumped back and she made another sharp thrust with that long and wicked-looking knife. His jacket was ripped through across the shoulder, six inches from his neck. Sweat broke out on his forehead. "Henrietta, listen, you fool, you little idiot, give me that knife." But he didn't try to get it, he only kept her fixed with his eyes while he backed to the door, edged to the door, got his hand around behind him and opened it, and fled backward and outward into the hall, then whirled and ran down to Canning's room.

She did not follow.

It was hardly more than a second when they got back, Canning in front, Johnny a little behind, and when they pushed the half-open door open all the way they saw why she did not. She was lying across the bed and the knife was on the floor. Canning picked it up, scared as though she might leap down on it before he got it in his hand. They couldn't see the blood on the front of her black dress at

first, but then they saw it was all wet, it shone with satiny wetness under the gaslight.

Canning wrote him next day that she was not too badly hurt and was going to recover, also that he had straightened things out and talked some sense into her, and that he didn't think she would bother him any more. Johnny read the letter in Asia's house in Baltimore. For no reason at all, when he folded it up and put it back in the envelope, drawing a deep sigh of relief, he thought, It happened on the twenty-sixth, as though he must mark that. The twenty-sixth day of April. I still had two weeks to go, he thought. Well, hell, Canning will fix that up, too, say there was a death in the family or something. He sighed again, then smiled.

"Good news, Johnny?" Asia said. She came in with her baby girl in her arms.

"Yes," he said. "A lot better than I expected."



---

## XII

*"'Tis not for nothing that we life pursue;  
It pays our hopes with something still that's new."*

—DRYDEN

---

WHEN JOHNNY heard that Edwin was taking his little wife and going to Europe for a lengthy tour it was as good as getting a present. For Johnny was a star now, with all the engagements he could handle, and plenty of money in his pockets and all the clothes he could possibly hope to wear. He was known, too, his face was known everywhere. He never walked down the street, whether in Baltimore, St. Louis, Chicago or New York, but that he felt people pointing him out, heard people saying behind their hands or out of the corner of their mouths, "There goes John Wilkes Booth, the actor. John Wilkes Booth." He supposed that was fame, it felt like it, it felt fine. But Edwin was famous, too, very famous, some people still said he was a better actor than his brother, and he was making even more money than Johnny.

They had a real family reunion at Asia's in the summer. Everybody was there except June who was still out in California. The two brothers did not agree on which side ought to win the war. Johnny, where he could speak freely, paraded out his whole argument for the South. Edwin listened, but did not concur. While Johnny smiled ironically and did not bother to interrupt, Edwin said slavery was against the doctrine of Christ, a festering sore. The South was a land of idle sons, ripe for viciousness. There was little industry and no invention. While the Negro worked, the white men decayed, and the South would have collapsed and fallen into ruin anyway, no matter what the North did. Look what they had done

with their forests and their mines—next to nothing. Look how they abused their ground.

“Look at the sons of bitches the Yankees are,” Johnny put in, still smiling ironically.

“You’re a damn fool, Johnny,” Edwin said. “They aren’t, and if they were, that’s got nothing to do with the argument.”

Their mother did not know whose side to take, the war seemed very silly and the quarrel between the North and South could have been avoided if people had only taken the trouble. She was sure it could. But she did not want the boys to argue. Johnny got so mad, and he would take some stand and act as though he had to defend it with his life, even when it might not mean anything to him at all. He had always been like that. She hurried to change the subject and get them started on something else. “Johnny,” she said brightly, “I’ve been meaning to ask you. How is your throat?”

“My throat?” He looked blank.

“Yes. You know. That hoarseness that comes on you. That Florry makes up that ’coction for.”

“Oh, that was just a cold. That’s better. I got over it right away.” He did not glance at Edwin who was looking hard at him.

Mother was puzzled but then she caught on. For some reason, he didn’t want to talk about his hoarseness in front of Edwin. “Well, I’m glad it’s better,” she said.

Yes, it was as good as a present when Edwin went to Europe. There seemed to be more room, more air. And Johnny wasn’t going to waste the time while he was gone, either. He was going to have the nation’s audiences so sewed up and tied up with awe and admiration for him that when Edwin came back he wouldn’t have a chance to overstep him.

He threw himself into the job, for the first time in his life working indefatigably, learning new parts—even light comedies—reconsidering and reshaping the old, never missing a rehearsal. Canning, overjoyed, made up a grueling itinerary, starting with St. Louis, to which Johnny had no objections. He played in Chicago. In Baltimore a Grand Bootherian Festival was given the night before his last performance and he was carried around on the crowd’s shoulders. His benefits were a gold mine. He played famously in New

York, too, but there he was hissed because his Richmond (damn his Richmonds, anyway) fell into the orchestra pit during the famous duel scene. The audience thought he had pushed or maneuvered him off balance deliberately, idiots that they were, because he had thrown himself into the fight like a demon, as a great actor should. The word got started that he was as mad as his father, but that only added to his fame. Then he went to Boston, where he was brilliant, wonderful, and people ran out of adjectives to describe him.

But a terrible thing took place there. For the first time, the hoarseness did not come after but *during* the performance! He was attacked by his enemy before all! He sweat blood. He doubly mimicked, whirled, bounded, fenced . . . the veins standing out on his forehead, his face glistening with sweat, his heart thudding.

That left him shaken. Quite shaken. He drank a whole bottle of brandy before he went to bed. He was afraid the next night, trembling, his mouth dry, before he went on, like the worst and most sickening stage fright, but it was all right, his voice was all right, he did well. He did better than well! The audience clapped, stamped, whistled, nearly tore down the theater. But it came out in the papers that the moving finger was writing, he should pay heed, there was grave danger ahead for his voice unless he . . . it was too silly to read all the way through, the critic was an idiot.

He went to the Midwest, trying harder and harder, went all over it like a conquering hero, then back to Boston, to theater after theater, to Philadelphia where now they couldn't do enough, to city after city, a long and glittering journey.

The war went on like background music at a festival, playing in the distance. (Sad, it was, booming, like the surf.) There were maimed men upon the streets, from First Manassas, Ball's Bluff, Mill Springs, Shiloh, Williamsburg, Fair Oaks, the Seven Days, Gainesville, Groveton, Second Bull Run, Chantilly, South Mountain, Antietam, Perrydale and Stone River, maimed by these battles and set back upon the public thoroughfares to crawl up and down. There were more black dresses upon the ladies, more uniforms upon the men, fewer dress suits. Otherwise, Johnny noticed it because there was no news at all that was worth reading in the papers any more. All you could read in the papers was the war!

Washington, however, made it the genuine article, the real thing. For every one soldier in every other city, there were a hundred, five hundred, here. For every marred and scarred man, twice as many, or more. For every horse, five horses, twenty. Thirty times more hospitals. There was more of everything—fruit, flowers, street peddlers, pinchbeck and gewgaws. More unfamiliar noise in station and hotel, street and bar, louder talk, unfamiliar-sounding shouted commands, rattling of spurs, rattling of swords, bounce of bales unloaded, boxes banged down, barrels rolled, fife music, drum music, hard soles stamping, gun butts set down upon cobblestone, tinware of soldiers clattering, unfamiliar sounds to the stranger, variations, musicale of war. More smells, too, of men at war, horses at war, women at war under the heat of the hot sun. And no rooms to be had! No place to crowd in and eat or stand up and get a drink!

Johnny played at Grover's Theater there in the spring of 1863, a famous actor, so advertised first and then proclaimed to be, in all the critical reviews—famous, radiant, handsome.

Washington was the center of the hive of Union, all her mighty effort issued from there, streamed out, gushed out. She was the North, but at the same time she was so like the South that Johnny could have taken her in his arms. The climate was as good as soothing syrup to the throat, and the city, though the streets were wide, muddy roads in spring or half a foot deep with dust in summer, the overly ambitious buildings half built by years like ruined castles half unbuilt by centuries, the dooryards unkempt and trees undisciplined, the shops small, the houses unimpressive, yet was more like a great metropolis than any city in America. Big, brave, multipotent, energized, glamorous with war, she was as stirring as Paris.

Johnny settled down to stay a while. Edwin was at home now, playing in New York. Johnny smiled to think what a run for his money he had given him, what a surprise it must have been to him to hear how his younger brother's name and fame had grown while he was gone. By leaps and bounds, leaps and bounds. And Johnny was not resting on his laurels. No, sirree. He was keeping at it as hard as ever.



He seemed to have found a way now to ward off the hoarseness during a performance, besides the brandy. It would have been hard for him to try to explain, but he *dared* it to come, he kept it away by main force, bracing himself and holding it at bay as he would have done a man, and that worked, somehow, it almost always worked. Of course that left him a little strained and tired, and inclined to be irritable. Even his vanity had to take a back seat for his soreness, tiredness and tension. It didn't work twenty-four hours a day to make him so charming that no one could resist him. It just worked twelve hours a day, six, three, not that, eventually, and he didn't have the friends he once had had. He was looked up to, envied and emulated, but no longer the pet of all, the darling. He was surprised to find that it did not matter very much, that the fewer friends he had the better.

But he liked Ella. It was the first time he had really liked someone rather well.

Once he started to tell Asia about Ella but then decided not to, and never did later.

Ella Starr, her name was, poetically, reminding one of the sound of a phrase in Sidney. If Johnny had tried to say why he liked her it would have been hard for him to do so, glib as he was. She was not very tall, about as tall as Asia, small, about as big as Asia, but blond haired and blue eyed. She did not look or speak like Asia, and yet there was something about the way she looked and spoke, yes, and laughed, maybe, and sang, maybe, that reminded one. . . .

Neither New York nor Chicago could boast the brothels that Washington could boast during those war years. Some officers far from home kept their ladies snugly in small houses or sly rooms, like Frenchmen, and took them out upon their arms to theaters, restaurants or driving, as bold as brass. They dressed them in fine feathers and let them preside over suppers for friends, but many were not bold enough to do this, few were rich enough, and lowly and in-between and magnificent bordellos flourished. Ella Starr's sister Nellie ran a handsome one.

Nellie's abode was just off Pennsylvania Avenue, a nice house, set in a spacious yard among shady trees. It was painted gray with white shutters and had an upstairs veranda and a downstairs one.



There were fifteen rooms upstairs and twelve rooms down, and that meant a lot of housekeeping, but Nellie was good to the black help and paid them well, so she had maids, a cook, two laundresses, a gardener, and things ran smoothly. Her husband Dudall helped see to that, he was as helpful around the place as a woman.

Nellie was older than Ella by eight years, which made her at the time Johnny first made the sisters' acquaintance, twenty-seven. She had great executive ability and while not beautiful was canny, and by her own efforts set herself up handsomely at an early age. If her little orphaned sister had gone respectfully through the Baltimore school Nellie placed her in, she could have learned algebra, philosophy, Milton and Mrs. Hemans and been an ornament to the community someday. But Ella, poor girl, was not fond of learning, and did not have the tact, temperance nor talent for respectability. Disappointed, Nellie decided that if the child was not (according to the worried headmistress of the school) going to be an ornament to the community, in the usual sense, then she could be so in another, with qualified help and guidance. So when Ella was seventeen she came to live with Nellie in Washington. There she thrived in the pleasant domestic atmosphere, fitted in charmingly with the other young beauties, looked upon Dudall as a brother, helped in every way she could and her sister was soon reconciled.

Nellie's establishment was the most expensive and also the coziest place in town. All the furniture was on a small scale, upholstered with light, bright materials, pinks and reds predominating. All the carpets were ruby colored, the chandeliers blazing with crystal prisms, French wallpapers were unobtrusive and fresh, the woodwork white, all the ceilings sky blue. The dainty French beds stood in airy, white-curtained rooms where fires burned in open grates in winter and the breeze blew through in summer. It was ornamented by perfect order, flowers in vases, candles, nothings, the glint of damask wines, purling voices, pretty pictures and statuettes, but mostly by the ladies who lived there. Some could stand the light of day and some could not, but at night it was impossible to tell which was which, so white and pink they were, and so fairly and tastefully clad from head to toe. Their company, aside from presents they demanded and expected like petulant ballerinas, cost as much

as the keep of a horse for a year, but was considered worth it. Nellie's was known far and wide, to poor men as an unreachable star shining in the sky, to rich and famous men as a palmy haven in a troubled world.

When Johnny met Ella, he did not know of whom she reminded him. It nagged at him, like a certain word that can't be recalled, and when he decided that it was his sister Asia, he was rather shocked and discomfited. But Ella was blond haired and blue eyed and he told himself there *really* was not *much* resemblance (but there was), and soon Nellie's establishment became to him the nearest thing to home he had found in a long time, and Ella the nearest thing to a real sweetheart he had ever had.

Ella promptly fell in love with him and became as a consequence a sort of lay sister in the household, but more than paid for her whim by taking over many tedious duties from Nellie. Dudall, Nellie's husband, as busy as a bee from morning until night, said he didn't know how they could get along without her, even in the role of domestic helper, since she made herself genuinely useful. Nellie thought Ella was foolish not to take advantage of her many opportunities but, instead, to stake all her hopes on Mr. John Wilkes Booth. She didn't by any chance expect the famous young tragedian to marry her, did she? Because if she did, Nellie admonished her, she was going to be sadly disappointed. Ella said she didn't expect that. Well, so long as she didn't expect that, Nellie told her, and wouldn't mind when he dropped her, and wouldn't bawl her eyes out when he went away and didn't come back and forgot her completely, why, it was all right. Ella said she wouldn't care, wouldn't mind, wouldn't bawl her eyes out. Just see that you remember, Nellie said.

One of Ella's great charms for Johnny was that she did not weep over every little thing, any more than Asia would have done. If he said he would come on Wednesday night after the performance and stayed away instead, though she spent three hours getting dressed, if he did not mention it later, nor apologize, Ella did not start crying her eyes out the minute she next saw him. When he promised to take her to the trotting races on Sunday but changed his mind and took Miss Bessie Hale, the Senator's daughter, Ella did not shed a tear.

She wanted to, often, but never did. Once he showed her a bracelet for Miss Hale. . . . Once, when she asked him if his hoarseness ever bothered him when performing on the stage, he almost struck her and flew into a frightful rage. She could have wept often to see how very much he drank, how often black melancholy overcame him for no reason, and when he told her he hated every living being, always had and always would, and when he said profane and unrepeatable things about Lincoln. But she was always dry eyed and smiling.

It took some time for Johnny to realize that he could depend on her for this equanimity that seemed to him so important an attribute in a woman. He began to trust her, seek her and be at ease in her company.

Miss Bessie Hale, on the other hand, was a born crier, and that should have eliminated her at once, but she was a very rich senator's daughter in the high society that he had been excluded from for all these lonely months after his taste of it in Richmond. It was pleasant to be introduced to famous names and faces, no matter what one privately thought of them, and through her he was glad to avail himself of this privilege. He decided he might possibly marry Miss Bessie Hale, or marry some other rich, well-placed and pretty girl, but he was not at all sure. The thought had lately come into his mind that he ought to marry advantageously, as the thought had come that he would very much like to go to England, but he had not given any serious consideration to either prospect as yet. Miss Bessie Hale might do, or might not. Sometimes Canning said to him teasingly, "Why don't you marry an actress?"

Johnny loathed actresses, particularly that behemoth Miss Charlotte Cushman. He had developed a fibroid tumor on the back of his neck and went to a doctor to have it removed. The operation was performed skillfully and when Johnny asked him whether he would be able to continue at the theater while the wound was healing, the doctor said yes. So Johnny kept on playing and went every day or two to the doctor's office to have it dressed. It was almost healed when that behemoth (it was the only word he could use to describe her) Miss Charlotte Cushman, playing opposite him, threw her arms around him as her role required her to do and, in-

stead of using gentleness, clamped him around the neck like a—behemoth. He winced and drew back but she hung on tighter, and the upshot of it was that she tore the tender cicatrix open, the gaping wound had to fill up by the process of granulation, and now he had a scar to show for it. No wonder he disliked her! He was sure she was the one who started the story that he must be a coward or else he would be fighting for the South, the one who said, "If he's so dead set on the rebels, why isn't he in uniform? Why doesn't he join up? Anybody can *talk*." He was going to get to the bottom of it all, the fur was going to fly, but Canning pointed out that it wasn't worth it. The whole bunch of them put together weren't worth the tip of Johnny's little finger, Canning soothed him. It honored them too much for him to be irritated by what they said.

He did not know why he made that foolish request of the doctor. He blurted it out without thinking. "Doctor, if anybody ever asks you about this scar on my neck, you say you removed a bullet, will you? Just say that. Say I had been shot once, and had this bullet in my neck and you removed it."

"Will anybody inquire?" the doctor asked curiously.

"Oh, I don't think so," Johnny said. "But just in case they do."

Anyway, he loathed actresses, no matter how many he was charming to.

Miss Bessie Hale would wait a lifetime, he decided, if she had to, for him to make up his mind what he was going to do about her, if anything.

Ella, more and more, he liked. He did not know that when he left Washington at this time to open in St. Louis, and didn't write her, not even a brief note, she kept right on smiling. That would have pleased him.

Dudall thought she looked pale and peaked and told Nellie so. He told her he would be greatly relieved when she got that actor Mr. John Wilkes Booth out of her system. Nellie agreed with him. So did all the beauties who could be seen by day and the ones who couldn't, lazily stepping downstairs in the early afternoon in their streamered wrappers and perching about the table in the sunny dining room while Dudall brought the coffee in, one cup at a time, for they didn't all come down together.



Clarinda said the fever was sure to pass, it was just like measles or anything else.

"I do hope so," Nellie's husband said worriedly. A great many little household tasks kept him occupied during the day, not least among them being the care of Juanita, an impudent squirrel whose ornate, revolving cage stood in the bay window of the dining room and who was always being fed too many tidbits by the naughty girls, but Dudall always found time to sit down for a cup of coffee and a little gossip.

Nellie sometimes joined them but she was generally too busy with florist's, grocer's and butcher's boys, the laundresses, upstairs maids and the cook, to be able to do it often. When she bustled through the room it warmed her heart to see how cozily Dudall sat with them, chatting. He sometimes read the newspaper aloud, too, explaining the various battle maneuvers and clarifying the war situation whenever they were puzzled, which was often. He also told them, step by step, what Lincoln was doing, what the Emancipation Proclamation signified, why Burnside was thrown out and Hooker appointed Commander of the Army of the Potomac, what the Enrollment Act was, why Grant failed to take Vicksburg (he went at it wrong, said Dudall), why Lee's army retreated in Virginia, who were the idiots at Chickamauga and who saved the day at Chattanooga. Eating spoon bread and strawberry preserves, he also offered advice upon various matters such as repaying insults, what to do about relatives wanting to borrow money, and what to take for a headache or an upset stomach. If small disputes arose between Clarinda and Guinevere, Esmeralda and Florence, or Dorothy, Pearl and Fleur, he settled them and kept peace in the family.

Nellie had married him quite by accident and without enthusiasm, although he had rather a large fortune, but now she considered him a real treasure and thought that the house would be at sixes and sevens without him.

Fleur said that Ella was sure to come to her senses soon, but all the beauties agreed that she was a little paler and more peaked than they liked to see her.



---

# XIII

*"The first angel sounded, and there followed hail and fire mingled with blood, and they were cast upon the earth: and the third part of trees was burnt up, and all green grass was burnt up."*

—REVELATIONS

---

JOHNNY went to St. Louis, and played as usual, gloriously. There, however, for the first time, to Canning's dismay, he did not size up his man, but paraded his well-worn Confederate slogans before the wrong people. As a result, he found himself in a military prison!

Canning thought he would be so angry that the jail would not hold him, but when he went to bail his star out, he found Johnny sitting docilely in a cell on the cot there with his head between his hands. He looked up with a fiery enough glance, however, and announced that he hoped they would all burn in hell—Lincoln, government, army, Grant, Republicans, everybody. But he did not raise his voice.

When Canning went to bail him out he found the authorities would not release him.

"Not release him?" Canning said, thinking of their many commitments. "Well, what in God's name can we do?"

"He'll never walk out of this jail unless he takes the oath of allegiance to the Union," the Captain said.

"Oath of allegiance?" Canning said, his heart sinking into his shoes.

"*And* pays a fine."

"Oh, I'm not worried about the fine."

But he need not have been concerned. Johnny took the oath of

allegiance to the Union before the Colonel in command without batting an eye.

His notices did not suffer, his audiences were as large and as demonstrative as ever.

More cautious now, he still reiterated his old, worn tune, but only to the known Southern sympathizers in the cast. Once, snapping his fingers as though he had suddenly hit on a great discovery, he said, "The man who kills Lincoln can be sure of one thing—immortality. *Real* immortality, nothing sham!" And then he recited some authorless lines of his school days that began:

The ambitious youth who fired the Ephesian Dome  
Outlived in fame the pious fool who reared it—

"What was his name? The ambitious youth?" somebody inquired.

"I don't know," Johnny said slowly, as though rousing from a dream.

"Well, if nobody knows what his name was, I don't see how he could outlive in fame the—"

"Good God," Johnny burst out. "That's not the point *at all*."

"Well, then, what is the point?"

Canning stepped in at just the right moment and carried off his star.

He went to Cleveland and was hailed as usual. But now he had something else to complain of. There was nobody in his audiences but women! Canning told him it wasn't true, that he imagined it, that there were just as many men as ever.

But when Johnny cast his eyes out over the crowd, they all looked like women. It angered him, like an insult, a slur, against him.

"It's the same thing as a boycott," he told Canning bitterly. "I suppose they're soreheads because I'm not fighting down in Louisiana! Getting my legs shot off or my eye gouged out with a bayonet; they'd like to have that happen to me, they'd all be tickled to death! Good God, I've paid for my substitute—I hope the rebels have put him through long ago. In fact, I've paid for *two* substitutes, you know very well I have. What more do they want? For me to come crawling home without an arm or my ear torn off? I suppose they go around blabbing to each other that I'm a coward, that I won't

fight. I suppose they won't pay their good money to see a chicken-livered coward!"

"Now, Johnny," Canning said. "You just imagine all that. It's all in your mind. Nobody expects you to go fight. You're a real actor. They love you, Johnny, all of them. There're just as many men come to see you as ever."

"I'm no coward," Johnny said sourly. "The time will come when I'll show them!"

"There're just as many men in the audience as ever. Honestly."

"I'll show them plenty!"

After his accident he left Cleveland as soon as possible, feeling it an unlucky town. Generally the famous duel scene in *Richard III* was fraught with danger for Richmond, but this time Richmond escaped unscathed and Johnny suffered. In the midst of the battle his sword was broken. He reached out and grabbed it by the blade and went on jabbing. His grasp being a light one, the next blow from his unlucky Richmond caused it to fly out of his hands—and his forehead was cut just above the eye. The blood gushed out. Richmond stepped back, very pale, and would have stopped fighting, but Johnny, still paler, caught up his sword again and said between his teeth, "Damn you," and they went at it again. So roaring an ovation did this action bring up like a tidal wave over Johnny that he was not even angry at poor Richmond. The wound was not very severe and the doctor promised that it would not leave a scar, so he forgave his fellow actor, and invited him for a drink, and, to Canning's surprise, made quite a chum of him during the few remaining days. Johnny also invited him to accompany him on the next engagement but the young man declined.

In Cincinnati he was kept off the stage for three of the nights of his engagement there by his bronchial trouble. He had begun calling it that and no longer thought of, or mentioned, his hoarseness, by this ruse putting it into the act-of-God category, not traceable to his ignorant speech habits. That meant Cincinnati was unlucky, too.

But now he had an opportunity to do something that delighted him! Not since the war started over three years before had he been farther south than Washington. A civilian could not get down

without a good excuse into the blockaded Confederacy, and besides, it was one big battleground, five hundred and seventy-nine battles being fought before the end came, in Virginia alone, so only a fool on a matter of life and death would risk it. Now, however, from New Orleans, which was in the hands of Federal troops and under the rule of General Banks, came an invitation to play in the St. Charles Theater.

Canning made inquiries as to possible danger and what kind of accommodations might be expected, and they accepted the invitation with pleasure. The first week of March, therefore, in 1864, Johnny opened in New Orleans to an overflowing house.

He had had to procure a military pass from General Grant at Vicksburg in order to get through the Federal lines, but did not see the great General himself, except from a distance when Grant got off his horse and walked into headquarters. Great General! Johnny wanted to burst out laughing. He wouldn't have known he was a general at all if Canning hadn't pointed him out, he looked so seedy, such a nobody, with a sweat-stained blouse and battered hat, and a face like a greengrocer's. Great General! He remembered the face of Divine Lee on the morning of John Brown's hanging. What chance would a man like Grant have against *him*? He decided it might not be a bad idea to remain for some time in New Orleans and be established there as the city's leading actor when the rebels won the war, as they were sure to do. He was always convinced of it but now that he had seen Ulysses S. Grant he was more convinced than ever.

He could not believe his eyes when he looked out of the train windows and saw the desolation of the countryside they went through, for the adversary had indeed "Spread out his hand upon all her pleasant things." The South, once like the garden of a mighty king, lay gutted and rutted, her fair houses uprooted, her flowers and trees brought down, her men brought down like trees, like the white alders that bleed red, her women uprooted like fair houses, her princes sent treeless and houseless upon dust plains in blowing rags.

"I can't look," Johnny said to Canning. "My God, see what

they've done to her." He had the tears of Horatio in his beautiful eyes.

"Well, don't look," Canning said.

So Johnny stopped looking and worried about the smudges on his fine clothes. They played a game of whist together and matched coins. Then darkness fell and he could no longer see outside of the slow-moving windows so he grew quite cheerful, the tears of Horatio drying almost before they fell.

New Orleans, in the hands of the Federals since Farragut captured the city, looked better, but not in a way to gladden the heart of a rebel. Union flags and replicas upon silk of huge, Free State seals fluttered in the street as thick as Chinese banners. The city was quiet voiced, busy with its everyday affairs, not antagonized nor resistant to the oppressors. This state of affairs shocked Johnny.

"They're craven, it's a craven attitude in the people. Why don't they throw these blackguards out?" he demanded in the hotel bar-room.

A cool-eyed man took his pistol out and laid it down, gave it a shove and sent it spinning along the counter, while silence fell upon the company present. The pistol stopped in front of Johnny.

"There," he said. "There's a shooting iron. *You throw them out.* We've been waiting for a hero to show up."

Johnny whitened.

Canning leaned around him and sent the pistol spinning back. "Too busy," he said smilingly. "Ask us a week from Tuesday."

The men laughed, and Johnny, oddly sick at his stomach, laughed too. . . .

Florry's 'coction didn't seem to help the "bronchial trouble" as it once had done. The brandy wasn't much good either, except to make him forget how nervous he had become of late. He told Canning that New Orleans was an unlucky city, the unluckiest of all, and the South was greatly changed.

His Gloucester was spoiled almost before he began, by what the papers for the first time called his "raucous voice." He stayed in bed two nights and days, out of all drafts and benumbed with brandy, and when he appeared again, it was better. He gave five



performances and was all right, they loved him, but the thing was bigger and stronger than it had been, harder to wrestle with, keep at bay, throw off by main force. It was worse than Jacob's angel, and he grew more and more exhausted, fighting it every minute of the day and night. He told himself it would get better, he would recover as from any other sickness. He had to! He would find some remedy. He remembered some of the stories Old Joe had told of marvelous cures and remedies. He would try to find a Negro sorceress of the kind Old Joe described, beg help from her; maybe she could make a remedy to cure his trouble.

At last the moment came for which he was no more prepared than for death itself. He was on stage—he opened his mouth to speak—and no sound came. He tried again, again. *No sound at all.* When he stopped trying he was in his dressing room with no recollection of how he had got there. All he could remember were the hundreds of glimmering faces out front with their mouths open, that he ran from in horror, tongueless, dumb, an anguished animal. . . .

When Canning burst into his dressing room Johnny looked like a man about to die of apoplexy, tears streaming down his cheeks, breast heaving, his white-knuckled hands gripping the edge of the table. He was glaring into the mirror, his horrified eyes on his lips, trying to say mother, mother, mother.

He went to the best doctor in New Orleans. The doctor examined him and prescribed complete rest for at least a year, possibly longer. The damage was considerable, he said, but a long rest, early hours, no drinking, no excitement, might possibly bring him around again.

He could use his voice in ordinary conversation after three weeks. That cheered him immensely, for if he could speak at all he would surely be able to go on with his acting soon.

How glad he was when he could open his mouth and say something again! He said, "I can talk. Listen, Mother, I can *talk*." By that time he was in New York, at Edwin's, where his mother and sister Rosalie presided over the young widower's bereft household and helped care for his motherless baby daughter. Edwin did not say a word about the catastrophe, except that he was sorry and that he hoped his brother would recover soon. Johnny thought he

detected sarcasm beneath his words but let it go unchallenged. As he told Mother, he certainly didn't come here to see Edwin. He came to see her. But he had another reason, too. He came to see the best throat specialist in all New York, who would, of course, cure him once and for all.

The European doctor, a tiny man of great bearing, with shrewd eyes and shrewd fingers, took a long while to examine him, or so it seemed to impatient Johnny. When he finished he sat down, motioning Johnny to a seat beside his desk. He looked at him musingly, a frown between his eyes, his lower lip pinched between thumb and forefinger.

"You are a singer, no?" he said.

"A tragedian," Johnny said.

"An actor upon the stage, so. And how long is this your life? What is your age, please?"

"Well, let's see," Johnny said, "I'll be twenty-six next month, and I've been in the theater since I was eighteen—eight years."

"This throat—it is not the first time you have been troubled, yes?"

"It's the first time I ever lost my voice entirely," Johnny said, "but I—you know, I told you—I have had bronchial trouble quite frequently, quite a lot in the last two or three years. Doctor, what can I take? How soon can you cure me?"

"Ah, there is the difficulty," the doctor said. Again he mused, again frowned.

"Difficulty?" Johnny said weakly.

It seemed a long moment before the doctor spoke. "It is like this, so," he said. "You have the sad misfortune—for the actor, the singer—pachydermia of the larynx, the thickening of the vocal cords. Upon some cases is nodules, not only the thickening. I have seen in post mortem many such nodules, on a young tenor so sadly who committed suicide because of this, nodules, and on others—This is misfortunate, the time is long for cure. I will suggest for this, your pachydermia of the larynx, or as it may be, nodules, that—"

"But what can I do?" Johnny asked, taking his handkerchief out and patting his forehead. "What causes it? Is it a disease? What is the cure? I'm desperate. I have engagements—"

"For you is no more engagements," the doctor said gently, "for many months. Years, it may be."

"Years?" Johnny said in horror.

"Long rest, long rest, of the throat, so. Inhalations—I will give you the powder and you shall put it into the hot water and make the inhalations—and then you will come back, so, and I will make the examination, and after that—"

"After that? I'll be all right? I can take up where I left off?"

The doctor shook his head. "Is no time for impatience now, my friend, is time for patience, the great patience. For after the long rest must come the long training—"

"Training?" Johnny asked. "In God's name, what kind of training?"

"The training," the doctor said, "to teach you the right way of the elocution, the breathing, how the sounding for the speech and the song must come from the chest, how from the trunk must come the sounding, and then the throat, the mouth, expels it."

"I know elocution," Johnny said bitterly, while Edwin crushing the rose between his hands and smelling it came into his mind and he wished him struck dead and buried. "I am a star, sir, no actor of minor parts, I am known everywhere, I am *famous*, if you want to know it. I *must* know elocution! How could I be a famous tragedian—the youngest on the American stage—and not know elocution? It's outrageous, sir."

"This I do not know," the doctor said. He opened a drawer at his side, took some powders out and folded them in a paper while Johnny fumed. When he handed it to him Johnny took it and stuffed it into his coat pocket. "I do know that what I say is the only hope for the acting to continue," he said. "These suggestions, so. The long rest, and the long training again to learn the elocution, how the sounding must come from the chest. Like the young pupil of speech must learn, so you, with the slowness and the patience."

"And otherwise?" Johnny said, getting to his feet.

The doctor shrugged. "The long retirement," he said. "The very long."

Johnny thought at first he might commit suicide, but, pacing up and down his room at Edwin's reciting *To be or not to be* hollowly,

came to the same conclusion as Hamlet before him and did not. He visited two other doctors and got no reassurance from them. His speaking voice was now the same as ever, but they said it would not carry him through enough performances to warrant his attempting an early return to the stage.

He decided to try a long vacation, perhaps a whole year of rest. That, of course, would be all the healing his throat needed, no matter what the doctors said, and if he had nodules, they would melt away; if he had a thickening of the vocal cords, that trouble would vanish, too. He would be a better actor than ever! He would have to be better than ever, he remembered feverishly, for in the meantime Edwin would be standing on his head and bending over backward, to be the cock of the walk! It came to him now that Edwin must have put a curse on him. By speaking of this very doom that night, those many years ago, he had brought it to bear, conjured it out of nothing. He had exhorted disaster from out of the shadows and brought it to pass, called down catastrophe upon his innocent young brother's head. Such things were possible. The Negroes on The Farm had often told stories of how such things could be. Edwin suggested calamity, and lo, calamity appeared. Sick with hatred for his brother, too full of despair to stay in his room, Johnny went downstairs.

At the door of the drawing room he heard voices; Edwin was in conversation with friends. "And Lincoln," Edwin was saying, "Lincoln accomplished—Lincoln brought about—Lincoln has been—" Johnny stood there a moment, not conscious of thinking, while Edwin, Lincoln, Lincoln, Edwin, merged into one, and the separate enmity against the two, that was to end in murder, converged into one hatred, as the Potomac and Shenandoah flow together at Harpers Ferry. All the ice of rage against the upstart North, all his frustrate bitterness, his envy of Edwin, his anguish, humiliation, the disappointment of his hopes, distrust in his star, despair of his future, swirled together in crashing flood of jealousy and loathing, as the hated word dropped from the hated lips at the one right, ripe moment! For when the sword hangs by a hair it takes no plowshare to sever it. It can be slashed by a blowing leaf, a sound, a single, simple name.



"I know who he is!" Johnny said, of Lincoln, as though he did know, for the first time, the well-kept secret name of the paramount enemy. (As though he had never heard it before or seen the man to whom it belonged.) "I'll pay him back," he said. He did not know for what, or when, or why, but he would do that, sure. The thought seemed to comfort and calm him.

He stood some moments more, with his hands clenched, breathing quickly, before he ventured into the drawing room. "I hope I am not intruding," he said, in his usual way. "I wouldn't want to interrupt anything."

The company greeted him.

"Come on in," Edwin said, nodding in Johnny's direction. He looked away and back again, at Johnny's face. There was something different—but no. The light, perhaps, and yet—and yet? It puzzled him. He blinked. And it was gone. . . .

He told Mother what the doctor had said and she didn't know what to advise him. She said she thought a long rest would surely be enough, and the retraining of his voice seemed silly to her, too. If anybody ought to know the art of elocution, it must be himself, for wasn't he famous, a great tragedian? She promised not to tell Edwin more than Johnny himself had told him.

He said to Edwin, "I'm going to take some time out, rest for a few months, try and get a little enjoyment out of life for a change."

"Good idea," Edwin said.

"Life is too short to keep your nose to the grindstone year in and year out. I'm going to try just living for a change."

He wouldn't try it long. By spring next year he would lie rotting in his secret, close-mouthed grave.



---

## XIV

*"And the second angel sounded, and as it were a great mountain burning with fire was cast into the sea: and the third part of the sea became blood; and the third part of the creatures which were in the sea, died; and the third part of the ships were destroyed."*

—REVELATIONS

---

ANYBODY WHO said that idleness, that having nothing to but enjoy yourself from morning till night, wasn't a pleasure, was a liar. Especially in Washington that heady last year of the war. As Johnny told Canning, who was mournfully trying to procure other employment and would remain in New York, "I could go anywhere, but there's the most going on in Washington." There were activities and spectacles without end in the capital city. Also Miss Bessie Hale was there, and other friendly and high-placed ladies, and many great houses were open to him. Last but not least, there was Ella, whom he had not thought of in weeks.

Dudall said that having John Wilkes Booth back in town was better than any tonic *he* ever heard of. Nellie agreed, and so did all the beauties. Ella, pale and thin and crawling around the house from day to day like a chilled fly, hardly singing, hardly laughing, though smiling as often and sweetly as ever, had been a sad sight for the eyes of them all. Juanita the impudent squirrel had been sick also, but she didn't keep moving as Ella did. She lay right down in the bottom of her cage in a stiff trance. They were all scared to death; Dudall sat up with her one whole night. He blamed the beauties (but resignedly, not scolding, for though he had told them over and over and over not to feed Juanita so many tidbits, they really didn't know what they did) for her alarming state, and

they chewed their lower lips and blinked back their tears. Even their rich and famous guests acted much concerned. Shockingly ill, Juanita recovered and was as good as new. It was different with Ella. She was sick, too, but sick so that nothing, not even apples, would comfort her. Nellie made her drink port with her meals; Dudall supervised the making of an especially nourishing soup; Clarinda gave her a lemon-colored basque with white bugle beads and Fleur brought in the third of a bottle of frangipani scent. But nothing would help, she got paler and thinner and crawled up and down stairs more slowly, and then—the actor came back.

The little black maid brought Mr. John Wilkes Booth into the bright parlor and bade him wait there. Then she ran upstairs to tell Miss Ella, and Miss Ella, by some miracle getting herself up like a queen in less than ten minutes by the clock, in spite of her thundering heart and shaking fingers, turned all her lights on inside, the lights in her eyes, the lights in her cheeks, the lights in her lips, the lights in her hair, that had been snuffed so long—and down she ran without touching the stairs or the railing, the little maid staring happily after her. Miss Ella could not believe it but it was as true as the gospel. Her Johnny was really there!

Dudall said that the actor was certainly a matter of life and death to Ella, wasn't he? Nellie was sorry and hoped she would soon get him out of her system, but the beauties shook their heads and said between themselves that they didn't think there would ever be an end to it. Yet everything has an end. Everything!

It was certainly no hardship to spend a vacation in Washington, Johnny wrote Canning. In fact, he should have come back here before, and he knew two years would flitter by like a dream. He lived like a gentleman in Washington's best hotel, rising at ten or eleven. He took great care to choose and put on his clothes in the most becoming manner, never shaved himself but went every day to the same barber, dined well, drank better, attended the theater, went to the shooting gallery, went for drives or rides on horseback. He strolled idly with organ grinder's music in his ear under the ailanthus trees on the Avenue, or loitered and watched the masquerade eddy by, the riding cloaks lined with magenta, grandee hats, sashes, high boots, uniforms so tight the officers had to be

melted and poured into them, the tiny caps that never fell off, though how they stayed on God only knew, the women like walking bells. He also accepted many invitations, danced, played at cards, joined in conversations with both Federalists and rebels, dissembling on occasion as became a reasonable man.

And of course he saw Ella. Now more than ever like Asia, she comforted him and knew the ways to please him. Since she was attractive, wore her tasteful clothes chastely, did not talk all the time nor call attention to herself in public, and had good manners as well, he began to take her about with him here and there. It was all she asked.

She would have been entirely contented if she had not seen with the eyes of love how eventually the days of idleness began to pall upon Johnny, how ennui began to etch petulance on his handsome face, how ambition began to eat and gnaw on him and spoiled his pleasures, how that center of him, his ego, with nowhere to expand, nowhere to go, yet expanded, got hotter and hotter, steamed and hissed, till it seemed sometime it must explode and destroy him in a wild explosion.

One day Johnny thought about money.

All of a sudden it occurred to him that he was not a rich man. He had made a lot, but spent a lot, too, thousands on his theatrical wardrobe alone until, with the costumes of his father, he had the finest of any actor in this country or any other. He traveled and lived like an heir apparent. He was still living like that! But maybe his money wouldn't last a whole year. Maybe when the year was over, his voice wouldn't be cured, maybe it would be the way that idiotic doctor had said, maybe he couldn't earn his living as an actor any more! He broke out in a cold sweat. And what would he do if he couldn't act? He had no other profession, no trade. He looked down at his hands. "Useless, useless," he murmured. Useless. They could do nothing. And if they could, if he could perform an honest day's work, how should he bear to labor in obscurity? He began sleeping less well, much less well, began eating less, drinking more, finding the hours as slow as in sickness.

When he thought of putting what money he had to work for him, to bring him more, he was delighted. For several weeks he had a

new lease on life. Consulting with many, even Dudall, and giving great consideration to the matter in all its aspects, he finally decided to invest in oil land. Men were growing rich overnight in oil. He would make a fortune, too. Taking Ella with him for company, very pretty and pleased in a dark-blue taffeta and a tulle bonnet tied under the chin with a plaid ribbon, he went up to Venango County, Pennsylvania, where they stayed for several days, the happiest time of Ella's life. When they returned to Washington he was sorry he had been wary at the last moment and hadn't bought more than a third interest in that valuable lease which was offered him. He should have taken up the whole thing, he decided. Why, that would bring him so much money that he would not have to return to the stage at all unless he wanted to, and then only for the renown. For that matter, even the renown might not be lure enough then. Let Edwin and Forrest and the others kill themselves on the stage and grow old before their time. Johnny, with incalculable riches, might take Ella and go to Europe to live, France, Spain or Italy, maybe all three, with a country house in England and a shooting box in Scotland. . . . Maybe he would buy a whole island somewhere. He had always respected money for what it could buy, but beyond enhancing himself with fine garments and wanting to be comfortable, his desires had been few. Now they were myriad and there sprang before his eyes a coach-and-four, a ship of his own, a train of his own, a stable of priceless horses, vast land tracts, mansions, solid gold tableware, cellars of rare wine, paintings, sculpture, black slaves.

Ella said he should not reproach himself until he saw how his investment turned out.

"Then it will be too late," he said tragically.

Egged on by his new covetousness, he made two more trips up to the oil fields, but both times he became apprehensive at the last moment and did not invest as much as he had planned. He had reason to thank his lucky stars, for the land proved worthless, and only by the greatest good fortune was he able to get rid of his holdings, suffering but a negligible loss.

This disappointment on top of that other disaster, the failure of his voice, seemed almost more than he could bear. He spent



less and less time in being charming, nothing pleased him. He found diversions nowhere. Ella worried about him. She said he was ill, didn't act like himself.

Miss Bessie Hale worried, too, but not because she noted any personality change. He seemed to have lost flesh and the pink was gone from his face, leaving a marble pallor that, while arresting, might mean that his constitution was dangerously run down. One night when she leaned over and asked him behind her fan to ease her heart and tell her that he was quite well, he suddenly realized, as though for the first time, how convenient a marriage with her would be. Voice or no voice, his future would be secure, there would be no more worry about money. He bent over and cupped his hand up to her chin, pulled her face gently around and stared hungrily into her eyes. They bulged and were too pale by far. A slight shudder ran over him.

"Did you never hear of a man wasting away for love? I am neither the first nor will be the last," he said.

She caught her breath. "Oh, Wilkes," she said, "Wilkes."

"This hand," he said, releasing her chin and taking her small left hand into both of his, "this hand, bestowed upon me, this finger"—he toyed with it—"wearing my ring—"

But he left it at that, did not come closer to a proposal, though Miss Bessie in an ecstasy the following days told her chums most secretly, "for Papa might object," that she was soon to marry the famous young tragedian Mr. John Wilkes Booth who was now in temporary retirement.

Then Johnny had the inspiration of inspirations!

In a sort of blinding revelation it came to him that he could be rich *without* oil wells and secure *without* tedious Miss Bessie Hale! He could be famous—immortally famous—without even going on with his career upon the stage! He wondered why he had not thought of it before, it was the most obvious and easy and fool-proof scheme in all the world.

He would kidnap Abraham Lincoln.

He would carry him down to Richmond and turn him over to the Confederate government. The Confederate government would then dicker with the hated Federals who would go to any length,



pay any price, to get their idol back. There would be an armistice, the war would be terminated, peace would come with honor. Honor to Johnny and honor to the South!

The man who accomplished all that—for even the North must marvel and be grateful to have the war brought to an end—would never have to worry about anything again in his natural life. The princes of the Confederacy would see that he was repaid, a fortune would fall to him from one source or another. Not only that, he would be the most famous man in all America! Every baby would be taught to lisp his name. Every paper cried upon the street would tell the story of his life, describe his looks, proclaim his valor, exalt his unprecedented act of wit and daring. Every history book would perpetuate his fame.

When he first got this inspiration he wanted to rush right out and tell someone. He was on the point of writing Canning. But then the thought came to him that this idea was like an ingenious invention. It must be kept in the strictest secrecy or it would be stolen. He did not even tell Ella.

She noticed with a lighter heart that suddenly he was more like himself than he had been in a long, long time. His terrible melancholy vanished. So charming, so sunny, so high spirited was he now that she loved him, if that were possible, more hopelessly than ever. Dudall and Nellie and the beauties were not so pleased to see the change in him, for it only ensnared their poor little Ella the more, and Clarinda said privately to Pearl that she feared, she really was beginning to fear, that Ella was suffering from genuine, twenty-four-carat love. If such was the case, she said, there was no cure for it, it was just like leprosy. Once you got it you were done for. Pearl would not agree to this. There was a cure for everything, she said, if only you knew what it was.

Johnny spent three days closely considering his brilliant scheme. He viewed it from all sides. He viewed it from the top and from the bottom. The best way would be, of course, he decided, for him to accomplish the whole thing *singlehanded*, capture Lincoln, carry him down to Richmond and deliver him to illustrious Jeff Davis. This scene evolved before his eyes, the actual deed rather fuzzy and out of focus (for there were a great many minor details to work

out), but his triumphant arrival at the Confederate White House to deliver his prize was as clear cut as crystal, every detail standing out. He would have on his fine riding boots, his gauntlet gloves. Ushered into President Davis' office, he would sweep off his black hat, bow low, say— He knew exactly what he would say, they would smile in delight to each other over his modesty, all the Confederate Cabinet, crowding around, wanting to be the first to shake his hand. And Jeff Davis would stand there beside him, one arm about his shoulders . . .

The only trouble with accomplishing all this singlehanded was that it couldn't be done. He dismissed the alluring vision of his triumph with a sigh and came back to the realm of possibility. He would have to have help. He would need one man, perhaps two. After long cogitation he decided on three. Then, as he studied by inquiry and a close perusal of the daily papers Lincoln's ways and habits, and knew approximately how, where and when he might be kidnaped, Johnny consented to one more. Added yet another, and one more. Finally he decided on six men and left it at that. He would have to seek out six men and persuade them to assist him. If his own name and prestige were not great enough to influence them, then he would hint that he was acting for the Confederacy, under rebel sanction and direction.

His six henchmen, he decided, could not be men of fortune. Rich men were hard to entice into danger, and anyway most of the monied rebels were absent, having all, either before or early in the war, gone south. They could not be persons of position and authority, either. Such men would be inclined to argue every point, might not take orders—and might even want to procure fame for themselves.

They could not be old men. They had to be strong and brave. Johnny mulled it all over and decided just what he would look for: six young men of no fortune and no standing. They must be docile, fit and of mediocre attainments. He wanted no star in this show but himself. It went without saying that they also ought to hate the North.

Convinced there were a great many such men walking the streets of Washington and Baltimore, Johnny set out to find them.

He discovered the first man in Baltimore, a friend of his, an old schoolmate from St. Timothy's. A little older than Johnny, Samuel Arnold was a slender young man with a gentle face. He had joined up with the South and fought a few months early in the conflict, but soon got discouraged and made his way home again. He hoped the rebels would win the war but doubted it. He spoke of their prospects with a sigh. His own were not much better. When Johnny, over a glass of brandy, after extracting from him a solemn promise never to reveal what he was about to hear, broached his plan, and Sam recovered from shock sufficiently to enable him to comprehend it—drinking half a pint of brandy while he contemplated it in all its ramifications—he made the statement that it might be pulled off. He repeated that it might, just might, and he would join forces with Johnny, but he sounded a little pessimistic.

"You know, Johnny," Sam said, after they had talked for hours and were about to separate, "it would take you to think out something like this. Remember how you used to be at school? Always thinking of things to do, always saying things. Remember how we used to lie along the riverbank under the trees and smoke those red clay pipes with the long stems—I'll bet those stems were a yard long—and say what we were going to be? You'd always say that you were going to be famous. That was all you ever seemed to think of. Somebody would ask you how you were going to do it? And you'd say such odd things." Sam paused, thinking. "You *are* famous now, of course, Johnny. We've all been reading what a big actor you are. Been reading it for years. How come you quit it?"

"Bigger fish to fry," Johnny said.

"Oh," said Sam, awed. "Well, anyway, you'd say such odd things and finally you came up with this scheme about overthrowing the Statue of Rhodes."

"Did I?" Johnny asked, smiling. He shook the drink in his glass.

"I'll never forget it," Sam said. "Remember how we all laughed? It wasn't so funny what you said but more how you said it. You asked us had we heard about the Seven Wonders of the World? Well, sir, you said, take the Statue of Rhodes, for instance. Suppose that statue was still standing. 'I'd overthrow it,' you said. 'How would you do it?' we said. And then you went ahead and told us,

some highfalutin scheme, but it sounded like it would work. And then remember what you said?"

"No," Johnny said, "not exactly."

"You never cracked a smile and you said your name would *descend to posterity* and be in all the history books, because you pushed over the Statue of Rhodes. You set great store by your name descending to posterity in those days, for some reason." He scratched his nose, remembering. "And then there was another time, Johnny. We were all down there by the river smoking our pipes and you said, 'I wish there was a big arch or a statue at the mouth of the Mediterranean Sea across the Strait of Gibraltar, with one side fastened to the Rock of Gibraltar and the other side fastened to the coast of Africa.' 'What for?' we said. 'I'll tell you what for,' you said. 'I would never rest day or night till I pulled it down and pushed it into the sea. Then I'd be famous, you bet,' you said. 'I'd be in all the histories,' you said, 'American and English and French and Spanish and every other kind.' So then somebody said, 'Yes, but suppose that when the big arch or statue came down, you came down with it? What good would it do you then?' 'I wouldn't care a bit,' you said. I think it was me that said, 'I bet you would, Johnny.' 'Oh, no, I wouldn't,' you said. 'If I did what nobody else ever did in the world, that's all I'd care about,' you said. You were dead set on fame in those days, Johnny. And isn't it queer?"

"Isn't what queer?"

"Why, you *are* famous, just like you wanted to be. You're a famous actor!"

"That wasn't what I meant," Johnny said. "I think it was something else."

"Fame's fame."

"There are different kinds," Johnny said. "There's one kind, and another."

Johnny's next recruit was Michael O'Laughlin and he was also an old schoolmate.

He was an Irish boy, but he looked as Spanish as José's pig, remorsefully so, with large, glistening dark eyes, curly dark hair and mustache and an imperial in which he took great pride. He, too,



had fought as a Confederate soldier but gave up and came home to Baltimore, where he took an oath of allegiance to the Union and procured a clerking job. He leaned toward the sensual pleasures, wine, roses and poetry. He lived at home with his parents, a young mother and an old father, and considered himself something of a poet.

Michael thought the scheme was feasible, too. What Johnny proposed seemed not only reasonable but alluring. Michael felt that he could use the fortune bestowed upon him for helping to deliver Abraham Lincoln to the Confederacy. He would retire and versify, but not like this fellow Walt Whitman. He preferred Tennyson's style. Half the time Whitman sounded addled, Michael thought. Yes, indeed he would be glad to join the conspiracy, if Johnny was going to attend to all the details.

Oh, Johnny would attend to all the details, he said. All they had to do was to follow a few orders. There was no danger and no difficulty connected with the project whatsoever.

He and Michael O'Laughlin shook hands on it. That night Michael dreamed somebody locked him up in a dungeon and wouldn't let him out. But there were baskets full of jewels standing all over the floor like baskets of fruit, so he thought that boded well. Next morning he kissed his young mother and said, "You think of something you want real bad, Mother, because it won't be long until you'll have it."

"All I want is for you to be good and happy," she said.

"I mean a present," he said.

The third, and youngest, man added to the growing cast of characters was about as hard for Johnny to find, and attach to himself by kindness and favors, as a homeless puppy. David Herold was a slight boy of eighteen, beardless and lightly freckled. He loved brass bands and partridge shooting and disliked work of any kind. He was the youngest child and only son in a family of seven daughters. His father was the principal clerk of the navy store at the Washington Yard for many years and had only just died, a man of fine reputation. David missed him, for Father used to take him hunting, from Washington to Chapel Point, crossing to Virginia and then



back to Alexandria, and other places, too. They had fine times together, he and Father. They were always "getting away from the girls" together and it was great fun. Really, seven sisters were a good many. None of them was very pretty, and they were pious as pelicans, all of them, Episcopalians, singing hymns and reading the Bible out loud. Besides, they were always cutting out and sewing up dresses; there was no end to the scraps and snips and bastings and pins and screaming for lost scissors around the house. Or they gossiped and pouted or giggled, and Mother was as bad as the rest. Besides, there was no comfort at home, they were all such finicky housekeepers.

David went to school a little but he had his mind on other things and didn't learn much. When he got big enough his father tried to make an apothecary out of him and put him to work in Thompson's drugstore but Thompson, despite a firm friendship with Herold Sr. and a liking for the boy, could not keep him. He was too frivolous and trifling to become anything but a danger as an apothecary, Thompson said, and suggested they utilize the boy's talents in some other field. While David frolicked and hung around horses, dogs, guns and brass bands, talking too much and laughing his head off, his father, mother and seven sisters considered where to place him. They had not decided at the time his father died, and many months later, when Johnny took him up, he was still frolicking.

He offered to sign his name in his own blood to a legal statement that he would never reveal the secret Johnny imparted to him. He would also sign his name in blood to a legal statement that he would do whatever task was assigned to him in the kidnaping of Abraham Lincoln, and stick to the bitter end. Johnny, hiding a smile, said it would not be necessary to go so far, he would take his word of honor. As for the end being bitter, there was not much likelihood of that. By all portents the end should be glorious, glorious for all of them. They would make their fortunes and have the rosiest futures imaginable!

"But I really will sign my name in blood," David said earnestly. "Any time you want me to, I will."

"That won't be necessary," Johnny said, his eyes twinkling. David was a peculiarly likable boy.

Once Johnny asked him if he would like to be an actor someday. "Glory," David breathed, pursing his lips and cocking his head on one side. "Would I like to be an actor! I'd act till my tongue hung out. I'd learn how to fight with swords and everything. I'd play funny parts and make the people laugh."

"Well, when our work is done we may consider it," Johnny said, to please him.

Now Johnny had three conspirators: Samuel Arnold, Michael O'Laughlin and David Herold.

His fourth henchman was easy to snare, too. His name was Lewis Payne and he was wandering around town without a thing to do. Born in Florida, the son of a Baptist minister, he went to war at sixteen alongside of his two older brothers, to fight for the Confederacy. He saw them both slain, first one and then the other. He killed all the Federals he could, to revenge them, but that didn't help very much, it didn't bring them back. He kept missing them. He fought at Gettysburg and was wounded and captured there. When he recovered they let him do some nursing in the hospital, doing what he could for his comrades. Many had cause to remember him with gratitude and affection. Then he was sent to a hospital in Baltimore but he slipped away and went back to join the fighting. He fought bravely until one day late in the war it seemed to him that there was no point in fighting any more. So he laid down his gun and quit, slipped through his own lines and went back to Baltimore. He had just arrived there when Johnny struck up an acquaintance with him.

Lewis Payne was the tallest, strongest and biggest of all the conspirators, also the best-looking. He walked and sat with grace and held his head proudly. His profile was noble, his eyes gray and his dark hair grew thick.

Lewis considered it and decided Johnny's scheme would work. He did not want a fortune, but it seemed to him that perhaps he would have fewer bad dreams if he helped bring peace with honor to the South. He kept reproaching himself for deserting her, couldn't get the thought out of his mind. His brothers kept coming back to haunt him, one dead in the ditch in the moonlight with his arms

flung up over his face, one dead under a shady apple tree at noon-time with his eyes on the red apples in the bright green leaves. *Peace with honor for the South* was the phrase Johnny used that made a conspirator out of Lewis Payne.

The fifth man's name was George Atzerodt. He was the oldest of the group, a stupid young man of thirty, foreign-born. He had been brought by his German parents to Charles County, Maryland, when he was a little boy. When he grew up, he went into business with his brother in Port Tobacco. They had a carriage repair shop; his brother did the wood and iron work and George did the painting. He was a good workman, homely, blond, blue eyed, inclined to stoop. Port Tobacco, where he lived, and Pope's Creek were two points of entry for the smuggling of mail and supplies to and from the Confederacy. People also got into rebel country from here, both men and women. Smuggling brought in a lot of money throughout the war, and George built himself a boat and got in on a good thing, too, while the getting was good. But he drank and gambled and lived with a pretty woman who wouldn't marry him, and it was hard for him to hang onto a dollar. He feared the smuggling would soon cease to be a source of easy money and the carriage repair shop alone made only a bare living. When Mr. John Wilkes Booth mentioned riches, George Atzerodt pricked up his ears. He thought that if he had a fortune his girl might consent to be his wife. Then he would settle down and not keep running up to Washington and Baltimore all the time but stay at home and behave himself. If his girl would marry him, it would be fine, he thought. It wasn't enough that she lived with him sometimes. He was always afraid he was going to lose her to someone else and he loved her very much.

The sixth man was John Surratt. He was twenty-one years old, a tall, skinny boy with a high forehead and scholarly face. He wore his light hair long and brushed back over his ears, his insubstantial mustache and goatee were scarcely worth the effort to keep them trimmed. He had an older brother fighting on the side of the rebels, but he himself did not go to war. Instead, he left school and

took up courier duty, his job being to take messages handed to him (by a man or men in high Federal office), concerning Union troop movements, and deliver them safely to Confederate boats along the Potomac. He was often in Richmond and had been praised by the Secessionists for his daring and fortitude. He was inclined to have stomach trouble and had a bad disposition. He was argumentative and hard to suit. Johnny had great difficulty persuading him to join the group, and he liked him the least, but with his background, knowledge of rebel territory and roads, his boldness and dash, thought he might prove extremely useful. If, later on, he got a swelled head and tried to take more credit for the coup than he had coming, he would have to be dealt with.

John Surratt lived with his widowed mother and younger sister Anna when he was at home, which was seldom.

Mrs. Surratt, his mother, ran a boardinghouse on H Street. She had owned the building for a long time but only recently moved to Washington. The family home was in Surrattsville, thirteen miles south of the city. She and her indolent husband had turned it into an inn long before he died, necessity having brought them to it. From owning land and slaves they had come down and down, and long before she became a widow Mrs. Surratt had begun to teach her children how to live in genteel poverty. In the fall of 1864 she leased the Surrattsville Inn to a man named John Lloyd and went to Washington to live. When settled, she put an advertisement in the paper that she had room for boarders. A Catholic convert from girlhood, she derived much solace from her religion, kept its holy days faithfully and abided by all its precepts. She was also a loyal rebel and took great pride in her two sons' aid to the Confederacy, one as soldier and one as courier.

Mrs. Surratt was in her middle forties, a plain-faced, large woman with shortsighted eyes and unnecessarily severe hair. She was, however, warmhearted, generous and hospitable, and overly indulgent to her children. John she adored, but Anna, her sixteen-year-old daughter, was the apple of her eye. She used to say that when Anna got married, with all her little notions and ways, she thought she would die. Anna was a spoiled girl, and pretty, with fresh, fine skin, lovely hair and clear eyes. Her mother gave her her way from



morning till night, and no matter whether she finished her French vocabulary for the day, played a tune on the pianoforte without making more than three mistakes, gobbled down two helpings of cobbler, tied her hair with a red ribbon or burned the biscuits, Mrs. Surratt marveled over her. She couldn't be made to buy a piece of goods for herself, but went around in rusty black. Whatever was bought was bought for Anna. Her mind, while her hands were engaged in endless household tasks, was always busy with the problem of Anna's future, Anna's future, of course, meaning an advantageous marriage. The fond mother worried constantly over whether the rich man would be good enough or the good man rich enough. Neither the one nor the other had yet appeared.

Johnny had all his men together now—Samuel Arnold, Michael O'Laughlin, David Herold, Lewis Payne, George Atzerodt and John Surratt—and all that was left to do was to act.



---

# XV

*"And the third angel sounded, and there fell a great star from heaven, burning as it were a lamp, and it fell . . . upon the fountain of waters. . . ."*

—REVELATIONS

---

ALL HE had to do was kidnap Lincoln. He had merely to say the word and his henchmen would move. He was irresolute, however, his plans were not quite completed, he had to think the matter out more fully. There were so many possibilities: to do it by day, to do it by night, to seize Lincoln from his carriage or bedroom, or while he was walking over to the War Office, as he sometimes did at one o'clock in the morning to get the latest reports from the front, or while he was at the theater. There were a hundred possibilities, each with a fresh set of details to work out. Johnny was not yet halfway down the list of them. He told the boys to lie low, hold themselves in readiness and wait until he gave the signal. It would not be long, he said. A matter of days, a few weeks at most. Then they would act.

They were glad enough to languish but hinted that they could not do it on air. David Herold and John Surratt had homes. The other four, once they came to Washington, had not. Johnny felt it as a shock that he was applied to for money, but since he was the mastermind of the undertaking and to all appearances well-to-do, he supposed it was only to be expected. As they said, they had to exist somehow. He had not calculated on any such contingency, but hastily ran over his assets and began to dole out to the men as much as he could afford. This disconcerted him, however. He had assumed the paying off would come later, and not from his own pockets but out of the Exchequer of the Confederacy. He had to

begin to practice small economies which he considered beneath him, moved to cheaper quarters and took to shaving himself, a job he detested.

He had two reasons for making a hurried trip up to Montreal, Canada.

The first was because he wanted to get his fine theatrical costumes and paraphernalia sent down to Richmond. They would be waiting for him when he got down there himself with kidnaped Lincoln in tow. It had come to him as a prick of conscience that for a great actor like J. Wilkes Booth to withhold himself from the public was little short of criminal. His voice, if tested, must certainly prove to be as good as ever, and it was his plain duty to return to the stage as soon as possible. He decided that after he got the President down into Richmond, and turned him over to the proper authorities, he would begin to act again! This thought cheered him greatly, for he could imagine how people would fight to see their great hero. It was possible that he would never return to the North again! But if he wanted to begin acting right away, he would have to have all his equipment there, where he needed it.

It seemed very roundabout to have to take his wardrobe clear up to Montreal in order to ship it to Richmond, but he investigated and was told that that was the only way to do. Confederate ships ran the blockade frequently from up there and shipments got to their southern destinations surprisingly soon and in good shape. Arriving in Montreal, Johnny turned his trunks, hampers and boxes full of velvets, satins, ermines, plumes, fake jewels and false whiskers (among his wigs in a separate bandbox the auburn hair of the dead Richmond maiden) over to a reputable blockade-runner. He addressed the goods to the best hotel in the capital city of the Confederacy, felt much relieved when it was taken off his hands, and considered he had taken a big stride forward. For no particular reason he opened an account in the Ontario Bank of Montreal, depositing five hundred dollars.

His second reason for coming up to Canada was this: He thought he might confide his great scheme to the Confederate officials who had established headquarters there in order to communicate more easily with England. Besides, the bank account of the Confederacy

was in Montreal. It was a hotbed of agents and influential government men. Johnny disliked intensely having to foot the bill for the advancement of his design, and considered laying his plot before some of the Secessionists in high office so that they could take over the expenses. He was sure they would be only too happy to do so.

It was not difficult to make the acquaintance of these great men, and he put himself in the way of casual introductions to most of them. But, after all, he kept mum about his secret. Half a dozen times he opened his mouth to confide it, but something held him back. He did not really trust any of them; they were too proud of themselves and their activities, too arrogant, too fond of influence. Men like that would surely push him into the background, let him do all the work, face all the danger—and then they would take the credit for themselves! They might see that he got a monetary reward, yes, but as for fame, *that* they would try to reserve for themselves by any means whatsoever, Johnny was certain. It did not enter his head that they might wholly reject the plan.

So he kept still, coming to the firm decision that he did not care whether it cost him every cent he had in the world, just as long as he could pull off his brilliant passado with no help from anybody but a few paid men. Let these officials gasp in astonishment, let them stagger with amazement when the time came, along with everybody else!

Greatly self-satisfied and hugging his plot closer than ever to his breast, he whiled away a few pleasant days in the glittering, snow-frosted North, bought a yellow fur cap, took a sleigh ride or two and then returned to Washington.

He saw his little band of men and told them to be patient. He had accomplished a great deal in Canada, he said. He paid room rents and gave out money to buy food with, bought David a gun (he would buy guns for all) and Lewis a rainproof coat. He said that now he was going to devote all his time to the kidnaping. They would soon act. There would be no delays, he said.

But there were. For Johnny went back and acted on the stage again, on two separate occasions.

The first was in New York.

June, the eldest son, having returned from California, Edwin

wrote Johnny that he thought it would be a fine thing if the three Booths appeared together in *Julius Caesar*, Edwin as Brutus, June as Cassius and Johnny as Mark Antony. The purpose would be to enlarge the fund for erecting a statue to Shakespeare in Central Park, a project dear to Edwin's heart. Johnny's lip curled when he received the invitation and he said to himself he would never "give Edwin the satisfaction." Pride conquered him, however. If he refused to play, Edwin might suspect the truth about his long vacation. He knew he could get through at least one performance without trouble (in case he had not improved as much as he imagined) and so he wrote that he would accept. Telling his six followers to bide their time and wait, for the end would come soon, he packed up and went to New York.

It was the proudest moment in Mary Ann Booth's life when she sat in a box with Asia at the Winter Garden and watched with two thousand people her three talented sons perform together on the stage. You would never guess that he had had anything wrong with his throat, for Johnny acted better than his father ever did, better than either Edwin or June. His mother couldn't keep her eyes off him whenever he appeared, and though he had sulked about his costume and considered it unbecoming, he looked wonderful in it. She leaned over and whispered to Asia. "Doesn't he look wonderful? Isn't he a great actor?" Her heart beat fast with joy as applause greeted her three sons when they walked on stage together, side by side, and when the three came and stood before her box, looking upward smiling, and all bowed to her, Johnny the lowest of all, she thought she would die of emotion. She was ashamed of herself to be so carried away, but her lips trembled, she began to cry, couldn't find her handkerchief and Asia had surreptitiously to give her her own. Oh, it was a proud, proud moment. She wished Junius had lived and could see these boys of theirs. She could imagine how he would have beamed at them. To her surprise, the papers next day gave most of the acting honors to Edwin, although June and Johnny were also highly praised. She hated to have her youngest son read what they had said about Edwin, but it didn't seem to bother him. He merely shrugged as though it was a matter of no importance.

At the table over their late breakfast the brothers began to discuss



the war. Soon they were in a heated argument, with June and Edwin on the side of the Union and Johnny taking up his old stand for the Confederacy. Something new had been added to his repertoire of slogans. Too goaded to remain seated, he rose majestically from the table and said, his eyes blazing, his face white, "You fools, you confounded idiots. Don't you know if the North wins the war, that man Lincoln will proclaim himself *king*?" So upset was he that not until he started upstairs did he remember how powerless the dangerous despot soon would be. Kidnaped, and in the hands of the Confederacy, Lincoln would have very little chance to do anything at all. This thought calmed him so much that when his mother, who was as pained by her sons' bitter quarrel as she had been happy the night before, came running after him and begged him to return and make up with his brothers he did so after quite a lot of tearful urging and kisses both from Mother and from Asia, and their tender assurance that he was "the best and the most precious of all."

In Washington he went back to plotting and scheming as though engaged in a full-time occupation. He thought of nothing but the kidnaping, had little time for Ella, less time for Miss Bessie Hale. The former began to pale and diminish again, the latter to regret she had spoken so hastily to her chums about marrying the famous young actor in temporary retirement, Mr. John Wilkes Booth. He was almost never to be seen, and if so, was so preoccupied that one felt quite left out.

Consulting with John Surratt, the experienced courier, Johnny drew up several schemes to seize the President. They chose the famous Underground Confederate Mail Route as the best road to carry him down, through Surrattsville, T. B., Beantown, Port Tobacco and across the Potomac into Virginia. Once they landed in Virginia and reached the Confederate lines it would be easy to get on down to Richmond.

For his own satisfaction at this time, to get firsthand information about the condition of the roads and where they went, Johnny took a jaunt on horseback down into the Maryland country. He did not, of course, tell any of the people he met what his business was, but only that he was considering the purchase of land or horses. He



went down in November and two months later he went down again.

That was how he happened to become acquainted with Dr. Mudd, who lived on a farm a few miles out of Bryantown. Johnny, being there on a Sunday, piously attended St. Mary's Catholic Church, and afterward, when the worshipers were standing outside chatting in the sunshine, a man named Queen introduced him to Dr. Samuel Mudd. As was the hospitable custom of those parts, the doctor invited him to his home for dinner, and to spend the night.

Dr. Mudd was a tall, slender man, washed with pink. His sandy hair was pinkish, his light-blue eyes pinkish, and his straggly, pink-tinted blond mustache and chin whiskers made him seem forty-five instead of the thirty-one he really was. A graduate of Georgetown College, he studied medicine at the University of Maryland, returned to his wealthy father's estate, built a house on a section of it, married a pretty young lady fresh out of a convent, and divided his talents equally between doctoring and farming. He was the father of three children.

Johnny went home with him after the services and made himself a delightful guest. That evening he entertained the Mudds in the parlor, recited poetry both humorous and sad, and recounted incidents of life upon the stage. He often glanced at his image in the gilt-framed mirror, a habit of his, but did it unobtrusively. Mrs. Mudd, a year or two older than himself, turned tight lipped and somewhat less than gracious upon meeting him, he was so handsome, but was soon won over by his compliments and gentle manners.

Her distrust returned twofold the next forenoon when she found the letter that young Mr. Booth lost out of his overcoat pocket (the last letter from poor Isis) and realized he was no better than a scoundrel. Reading it with shocked eyes, she found that the woman was *married*. How he must have played upon her passions to make her forget her sacred vows, she thought. What a wicked spell he must have cast! She could see his face this minute—his ripe lips under his silken mustache, his wonderful eyes under his thick hair, his arms outstretched, whispering, offering, saying— Mrs. Mudd rubbed her hand across her eyes and crumpled up the letter. For this man, some poor woman's soul must writhe in eternal torment,

and God have mercy upon her, whoever she was. She hastened to the kitchen, took the lid off the stove and stuck the wad of paper into the fire. "Suppose it were—someone like me—" she said, and the leaping flames for an instant colored her cheeks with burning red.

Two months later Johnny again spent a night at Dr. Mudd's and again won over Mrs. Mudd, almost making her forget the letter. He made another futile sally around lower Maryland and returned to Washington. Soon after, Dr. Mudd happened to run into the actor when on a visit to the city, and had a few moments' chat with him (yet he always claimed that he did not recognize the man who came to his house the early dawn of April 15th with a broken ankle, though within the previous five months he had seen John Wilkes Booth three times).

The delay began to irritate the conspirators. They were growing restive, not David Herold or Lewis Payne, who grew fonder of Johnny with each kind word or little favor and whose admiration for his person and attainments knew no bounds, but the other four. They muttered among themselves. John Surratt sometimes threatened to withdraw from the scheme entirely. But as Johnny patiently pointed out, he himself, Johnny, was the sufferer, not them. Every hour's delay meant money out of his pockets, not theirs. He begged them to have patience and said they would not regret the time spent in preparation.

"Why don't we act?" John Surratt demanded. "What are we waiting for?"

"We don't want a failure," Johnny said. "We have to know how to proceed every step of the way. We're liable to lose all we've worked for if we go into this thing headlong. We've got to know just exactly what we're doing."

"Either we know, or we don't," John Surratt said stubbornly, but Johnny took his own time.

He visited the Surratt home frequently. Mrs. Surratt was at first uneasy about her son's friendship with an actor, but being informed of his fame and soon thawing in the warmth of his charm, she began to consider his appearance within her family circle as a circumstance of great good fortune. Her son was sure to derive benefit from knowing him, she thought. She was not, of course,

told of the plot to kidnap the President, which would have horrified her. It began to come to her mind more and more that perhaps this might be the very man she had dreamed of for precious Anna, as good as he was rich, as rich as he was good. For naturally he was both, one could tell at a glance.

When John told her John Wilkes Booth drank like a fish and had a relationship with a—he could not bring the word over his lips—and did other things as well, his mother rebuked him. Mr. Booth had always been a perfect gentleman, she said. He treated her and Anna as if they were duchesses. Besides, he didn't have the earmarks of a drinking man, he never smelled of liquor nor was he ever the least bit tipsy. And she could read character! she said. There was very little that was bad in a man who could sit in a parlor and recite that poem "The Beautiful Snow" as he did, so that when he finished the tears were running down his listeners' faces.

Poor, pious, innocent Mrs. Surratt did not object to Johnny, when a timely objection might have preserved her from the dubious honor of being the first woman to be put to death by the American government, and of hanging by the neck until dead. Instead, she only thought that the Lord must have sent him to lift her children back up to the station in life to which they belonged.

Oddly enough, Johnny's plan to seize the President was practicable. Lincoln was often unguarded for long periods of time, his movements were never concealed, he rode for miles in his carriage accompanied only by his coachman, and the White House was open to any and all. He could be kidnaped easily. Mulling and mulling over the act, however, Johnny got so he couldn't see the forest for the trees.

It took, not weeks, but months to "work it out," though John Surratt could not understand why. Johnny, when pressed, turned uncommunicative. All he asked was just to be allowed to handle the thing in his own way, he said. All his men had to do was wait, the time would come. Their hopes brightened when they saw he was buying a good deal of equipment—carbines, three pairs of dueling pistols, rope, a monkey wrench and knives.

Under any other man the six followers might have given up

long before they did, but Johnny, paying out his money, held them together by sheer personality, a kind of bewitchment that hypnotized them, even John Surratt.

He appeared one more time upon the stage, at the earnest request of the actor whose benefit the night's performance was to be. When asked, he was eager to oblige, remembering his wardrobe which must be already waiting for him in Richmond and the radiant career he would take up again down south as soon as Lincoln was in the hands of the Confederates and the war ended. He was glad of the opportunity to see if his throat was cured and his voice recovered. To his great joy, it came out as clear as a bell and he considered that he had never given a finer performance. The doctor was wrong, he thought jubilantly. He was entirely well—his voice would never break down again. After the show he was happier than he had been in many a long day, wild with happiness. He could hardly wait to perform his daring act and get started on the path of glory.

That night he was tender with Ella, kinder than he had ever been. He asked her idly if she would like to live down south. Big things were going to happen soon, he said, big changes. If he went away, and happened to send for her, would she come? She said, lightly, so as not to alarm him with her earnestness, that if he went down into hell, and asked her to follow him, she would follow, with never a backward look.

"Heaven," he said, drawing her close to him, "not hell."

"I wouldn't care which," she said.

His last performance on any stage was at Ford's Theater, on the night of March 18, 1865, when he played Pescara in *The Apostate*, unless one counts another portrayal at the same theater a few weeks later, when he acted the part of an assassin with only one line to speak. . . .

When the word came that tomorrow was the day, the big day, the actual day, Samuel Arnold said that he, for one, could hardly believe it. Michael O'Laughlin said he couldn't either. He never would have thought a fellow could get so tired of loafing around, he said. George Atzerodt looked wise and said it was no surprise to him—a man like Mr. Booth didn't give all his time to something and then have nothing come of it. Lewis Payne said that they



could be sure of one thing, that after all Mr. Booth's preparations everything would go like clockwork. David Herold said he did hope it wouldn't be too easy, no soldiers or anything! He hoped they'd have a run for their money so they'd know they did something. John Surratt, like a proud lieutenant, said, merely, that he was ready.

The next afternoon President Lincoln was going to a performance of *Still Waters Run Deep* at the Soldier's Home three miles out of Washington on Seventh Street Road. Once the city was left behind, this was a lonely stretch and a man alone in a carriage, behind a single coachman, could fall easy prey to a band of seven armed kidnapers.

That night Johnny sent David down to T. B. with some of the guns, a length of rope and the monkey wrench. He was to wait there for them at the crossroads. Then they would all go on down to Port Tobacco, forty miles south of Washington. There they would remain until dawn when George Atzerodt would take them over to the Virginia shore in his boat. Once over in Virginia and through the lines, they could obtain fast horses and be in Richmond before nightfall.

Johnny had an answer for every objection, but there were few. David Herold gladly did as he was bidden, saying as he left, "Well, when you all get down to T. B. tomorrow evening, I guess old Abe Lincoln's going to be pretty surprised to see *me*."

"I'll be surprised, too," Michael O'Laughlin said jokingly. "Take care you don't get lost."

They were all anxious to get it over with, anxious to move. Some of the plot sounded like a play on the stage, but moving swiftly as they intended, surprising everybody half out of their wits, they had no doubts but that they could accomplish it. Even John Surratt said they could. The mystery to him, though, he said, was why they didn't do it weeks before. There had been, not one or two, but a hundred such opportunities as today offered.

"You haven't been hurt by it," Lewis Payne said. "Johnny knows what he's doing. He waited because there were reasons for him to wait, you can bet on that."

"I'd like to know what reasons," John Surratt said. "It's a mystery



to me." He was going to be glad when the thing was over. He didn't like the way Johnny was honored and fussed over in his mother's household, nor the way he would drop in out of a clear sky. For that matter, he didn't like Johnny, even if he let himself be led by him.

John Surratt's job was to seize the reins of the President's light carriage and, while Lewis Payne overpowered the coachman, drive it over the Eastern Branch Bridge. After a few miles, and at a spot along the underground route where Surratt knew they could pick up some horses, they would abandon the carriage, the trussed-up President would ride in front of Lewis Payne and they would make the dash to T. B.

Samuel Arnold wondered apologetically what they would do in case there were sentinels on the Eastern Branch Bridge.

"Shoot them," Lewis said.

"But then they would be certain to shoot us," Michael O'Laughlin worried, "and that would spoil everything." A dead poet can write very little poetry.

But Johnny said there was to be no shooting. Instead, if confronted by soldiers, Surratt was supposed to drive the President's carriage still faster. The rest of them, on horseback, must salute, call out something, and ride in close to the swiftly moving vehicle. That way, the sentinels would think the President was merely being guarded and accompanied on some important journey. As Johnny explained it, it sounded very plausible! There were no further questions.

It would have worked, they could have brought it off as planned, there was no doubt of it. The difficulty lay in this: the President didn't show up. He didn't come out the Seventh Street Road to the Soldier's Home to see *Still Waters Run Deep*!

When the performance was nearly over, one of the actors, taking a breath of fresh air in the small garden back of the theater, was astonished to see John Wilkes Booth, whom he knew by sight, appear from nowhere. He had on handsome boots, flashing spurs and carried a gold-handled riding crop in his hands.

"Who's inside?" Johnny asked, glancing over his shoulder.

The actor said they had a full house.

"The old man?" he inquired. "Did he come? Lincoln?"

"Not that I know of," the actor said. "I didn't see him." When Johnny turned to go, he added, "What's your big hurry? Why don't you go on in?"

"Can't," Johnny said. "I've got a new horse and he's nervous as the devil."

They didn't give up right away. The President might only have been delayed. Hidden in the brake they watched the long stretch of lonely road, not speaking. John Surratt's lips were compressed and he kept glancing at Johnny who was pale and kept his eyes fixed on the horizon.

Then! Here came a coach!

"It's one of the White House coaches," Lewis Payne announced excitedly. "I've been studying them. That's what it is. One of the White House coaches!"

"He'll be in it," Johnny promised. "Get ready to ride."

They forgot to breathe, their hearts forgot to beat, their eyes to blink, while they got ready. The rapidly rolling wheels came closer and closer; Johnny gave the signal and they burst from cover, galloped up onto the road, wheeled, got set—stared—stared—and the man inside the White House carriage was not Abraham Lincoln at all! They did not know who he was, had never seen him before, never hoped to see him again. He returned their stares coolly and while they sat on their horses, dumfounded, the coach rolled on and on and out of sight.

"Our plot is discovered," John Surratt said sharply. "We have been betrayed, or have betrayed ourselves. That man was placed in that carriage by design. Our movements are known. I doubt if we can get to our homes without being arrested!"

"Buncombe," Lewis Payne said. He tried not to look at Johnny's pallor, the strange, dazed look in his eyes.

"Yes, buncombe," Samuel Arnold also said, and Michael O'Laughlin echoed it halfheartedly. George Atzerodt was silent but he was wearing the blush of a man caught in a painful *faux pas*.

"Well, I'm riding," John Surratt said, "and I've heard all I want to hear about kidnaping and money to burn and blatherskite. I'm all through, my friends."

They all were, even Johnny, though Lewis Payne and David Herold, the latter sent for and back in Washington with such a long face it was a wonder he didn't trip over it, said they would hang around for a while. Johnny might need them yet, they said.

"I left the stuff out in Surrattsville, at the inn there with Mr. Lloyd, Johnny," David said. "George told me maybe we was being watched so I didn't dare bring the guns and things on into town. I can go out for them some of these nights, maybe."

He looked at Johnny but Johnny didn't answer. His eyes were fixed on the tree outside his window.

"Or else we can leave them," David added with a bright smile. "Who knows? We might need them yet!"

---

# XVI

*"And the fourth angel sounded, and the third part of the sun was smitten, and the third part of the moon, and the third part of the stars . . . and the day shone not for a third part of it, and the night likewise. . . ."*

—REVELATIONS

---

JOHNNY WAS always more than a little proud of his head for liquor. He used to say that, much as he drank, he was never drunk. Drunkenness was for the ill born, the vulgar fellows, churls, even if Socrates was numbered among them. But the brandy was stronger these days, or he had contracted a mysterious fever or something that made him vulnerable. On mere pints he became as raddled and befuzzled as a sot. It amused him and felt good, like a cool compress on a rampaging burn, but it puzzled him, too. He drank and drank and drank, cherishing the new solace that disorientation, dispersal of painful entity and blank-faced unconsciousness brought. He liked to be dead drunk. He had never liked anything so well before in his life.

Ella thought he was drinking so much because his hoarseness, his bronchial trouble, had come back on him. For three days he couldn't speak above a whisper.

The night of the day his hopes were smashed, his scheme fell through and Surratt deserted (he himself deserted, for suddenly it was the most ridiculous enterprise in the world, it was impossible, it made him sick to think of it) and the others deserted, too, except Lewis Payne and David Herold, his old trouble came back. He tried to speak and couldn't. All alone in his room for two nights and two days, there wasn't any need to speak, however. It worried him, but there was nobody to talk to so it did not matter. If he wanted

to act again, he thought, going backward to the bed and forward to the window, forward to the bed, backward to the window, a glass in his hand, a glass never out of his hand as long as he could stand up, if he wanted to act again, murmur the sweet soliloquy, thunder the large expostulation, proffer the clamorous suit, *act*, there was plenty of need for a most excellent and never-failing voice. What would he do without one? Dance upon his hands?

He tried to take stock of himself. He did it oddly, for him. The wrong words kept coming—fool, failure, folly, loss, shame, defeat, coward, poltroon—words he did not want to think kept coming to mind. He tried to forget them but could not. Even when he set his glass down, leaned over to see in the mirror if his face was the same face of beauty and light, found it was, and felt tears upon his cheeks because it was, the words kept coming to mind.

He was supposed to be down in Richmond now, Jeff Davis' arm about his shoulders, not here alone, abandoned. Everybody was supposed to be singing the praises of their immortal hero because under the eyes of the whole North he had seized that tyrant Abraham Lincoln and delivered him into the hands of the Confederacy! A fortune was supposed to be pressed upon him for his services, a mansion, servants, fine friends, the spelling of his name verified so that it would appear in print correctly, his portrait started in oils, pastels, in black and white. . . .

And where was he? In a hotel room over an alley, walking back and forth, his throat paining, without voice or hopes, all hopes of every description gone glimmering—ahead, nowhere to look—ahead, nowhere to go—and penniless.

No, not penniless. He could live a few weeks, live well for a few weeks. Then he could get money from Mother (it would not matter that she had to get it from Edwin) or Canning—no, not Canning. Canning was always broke—but somewhere. By God, he would marry Miss Bessie Hale. He thought of Asia, Ella like a lost land, the three Ortygias those islands of beatitude, his heart ached thinking of that country. . . . By God, he would show Edwin, show Lincoln—Lincoln? who was Lincoln? For the first time he began to realize he was drunk, getting drunker. He laughed because his head had grown so tall, cried because his feet had grown so small,



so distant, as useless as his voice, his hands as useless as his feet so that they dropped the glass and it broke somewhere upon the rocky shore far, far beneath. . . .

Ella came and found him, found David Herold and Lewis Payne there swabbing him off with water and giving him black coffee. He looked bad, but he said he was well. He had only been drunk, he said, as if he had not once considered such a state beneath the true gentleman and a shame to him. Ella did not know his two friends. He said to them in his strange, whispering croak, "You might as well go on about your affairs because I've given up the enterprise." They said they would just keep themselves within call in case he needed them. It sounded perplexing to Ella. "I won't need you," he said. "I've given up the scheme. And you may as well know I can't afford to stand any more expense." They knew what he meant. They said they understood that perfectly well, they didn't want anything from him any more, only to be called on if needed. Well, so long as they understood, Johnny said, that his decision was final. When he pressed some bills into David's hand—Lewis Payne backed away—he said, "This ends it, do you understand, David?" They said they understood. "Everything between us is finished."

Ella asked Dudall's advice. "He's having that bronchial trouble again," she told him, "and imagine, this time he hasn't even been acting on the stage. It must be terrible to have it happen when he hasn't even used his voice, just in everyday life. I don't think he knows what to do or which way to turn. I know it's because the hoarseness came back that he's drinking so much. Dudall, can't you think of anything someone could do for him? Isn't there a doctor—isn't there some treatment? He never used to get drunk and now the past week it seems like he's never sober. Can't you think of anything?"

Her brother-in-law, full of the news of Sheridan's joining Grant at Petersburg and considering how he could clarify the situation in the minds of the beauties so that they would know what to expect next, said, "The only thing I can think of, Ella, my poor girl, is that you and Johnny Booth had ought to go separate ways. I've thought it, and I think it, and the sooner it happens the better."

"But you don't understand, he needs me so terribly, really he needs me, you 'don't know—"

"I hate to say it," Dudall said gently, "but whatever's the matter with him, you can be sure of one thing. It's a dispensation from"—he glanced upward to a spot on the ceiling just under Clarinda's dainty French bed (she slept directly over the dining room)—"above." Juanita the impudent squirrel began to run as hard as she could in her pretty cage and the wheel went whirling round and round. "You know," he added, glancing at the brisk creature fondly, "I sometimes think she understands every word we say. Do you suppose so? Animals are a whole lot smarter than we give them credit for."

"I don't know," Ella said sorrowfully, pulling at the tassels on her sash, "I don't know."

Johnny's voice got better. He would be fine, he thought, if he could just make a decision. If he could admit that Edwin was right that night so long ago, that the doctor was right to advise him to start in all over again and patiently learn the art of elocution, his trouble would be over, the thing could never happen to him again. If what they said was true, he could play forever. The day he stopped playing his voice would be as good as the day he began. Look at Edwin, look at Junius, look at Forrest. They could not compare with him for force and fire, yet they had never lost their voices for five minutes, no matter what grueling roles they played.

But how could he have been wrong? It was not possible that he, Johnny, did not know how to breathe, how to speak! My God, think how his audiences had groveled—think of his last tour—think of the thousands that sang his praises—no, it was no fault of his. It was all Edwin! Edwin had called down a curse upon him by naming disaster. Edwin-Lincoln, Lincoln-Edwin (where did that tune come from? how had that name crept in?) had eternally damned him! To start in and study now would take months, years. And how would he live? With Mother? She lived with Edwin. Asia? She had that insufferable husband. How then? With whom? Where? On what? And he would grow older, lose—he glanced quickly into the mirror in case it was trying to slip away—his looks, his grace, be passed

over, forgotten. Never heard of him, my friend, they would say. Never heard of John Wilkes Booth.

Anyway, suppose he got his voice back, his fame back, was that fame? What was fame? What was fame if—as another man than yourself, uncontemporary or coexisting—you could lift two thousand people out of their seats but couldn't as yourself in here and now, tell thirty millions, forty millions, more, to turn right, turn left, and see them do it as the moon saw the ocean sit up, beg, lie down and roll over? What was fame, no matter how resounding if, when you died, it died, too, as the pet lion starves and withers when the hand that fed it is no more or anywhere? What was fame that died, a name that died upon a tombstone hid with snow, hid under moss and filth of flip-tailed birds? Why, why, did beauty and genius walk upon the earth, if not to be remarked and stored for future time like honey stored, remarked, used, eat upon, forever?

There was a poem that had "rudderless" in it, which gave it a horribly hopeless air, something about a rudderless ship upon a dark ocean. He must ask Asia which poem that was. If only he knew. He rubbed his face worriedly. But there were things he needed to know more—which was north, which was south, which way to steer for shore. Should he ask Miss Bessie Hale to marry him? She would, of course. Jump at the chance. Oh, bulging, tear-filled eyes. When he couldn't bear the sight of her or smell of her another moment and stayed away and didn't come home, she would cry, he would find her gruesomely crying. When he struck her she would cry. When he drank. When he spent her money. My God, he would spend it. All women cried. Not Ella, though. Why not take Ella and go to England? Maybe that was all he needed. Yes, of course it was. A change of climate. Why not take Ella and go?

Now what about his wardrobe down in Richmond? How had his valuable twenty-five-thousand-dollar wardrobe got down to Richmond? Oh, yes, he shipped it himself from Montreal. Where was his yellow fur cap? What had become of it? He might need that fur cap again someday if he wanted to take a sleigh ride.

If he could make any sort of decision at all, no matter what, he could think again, he would be all right, the same as ever. But he

was so horribly perplexed, so many problems stared him in the face. Should he take Lincoln's advice—not Lincoln's, pardon, Edwin's (now why should he keep thinking of diabolic Lincoln?)—and relearn how to use his voice? Should he take Asia—no, not Asia, Ella (a man didn't have his own sister for a sweetheart)—and go to England? What would he use for money? If he could decide on something, he could live—anything, whether to shut the windows, buy a paper, anything, he would be all right. He groaned and buried his face in the pillow. "Help me, help me," he blubbered, to no one.

He did not look much different on the streets, in the saloons, at the theater, at Miss Bessie Hale's, at Ella's. Still spruce, paradoxically more spruce than ever, he had gone back to having himself shaved and took great trouble with his clothes. He appeared here and there as before. Drunk, charming, he explained as though he had suddenly uncovered a talent to speak Latin, that he might possibly be intoxicated, and if so would wish not to offend. When he staggered and obviously was, catching onto the edge of something to steady himself, he looked owlishly smug as though to say, "You see? Did I lie?" Miss Bessie Hale was more smitten than ever. Ella's love had gone out so far it had started to curve, like space. Dudall and Nellie and the beauties began to despair of her, and Clarinda repeated hollowly that real love was just like leprosy.

When Richmond fell, Johnny heard the news along with everybody else. He was drunk, and had forgotten the war for some centuries. At the bar in the National Hotel he was still trying to decide whether to take Edwin's advice, whatever it was, or whether to give the auburn wig to Miss Bessie Hale and say, "Will you marry me?" "That was a dead girl's hair," he would say to Miss Bessie Hale. "She bequeathed it to me so I would always remember her, but to save my soul I can't even think what her name was." Or perhaps he would get pen and paper and write and ask Asia what poem that was about the rudderless ship. Perhaps he would go and see her, ask her to come with him to England. "Ella, will you come with me to England?" But how could he go? No money, and with his valuable wardrobe in the guest room in the house of Jeff Davis? For all he knew Jeff Davis was gone, and the



house was locked, and Johnny had no key. Now, that would be a fine state of affairs!—a star with no key, no wardrobe, no money, nothing.

He heard people saying Richmond had fallen, Jeff Davis, his wife and children were in exile, the Cabinet tiptoeing away. Abraham Lincoln went down to Richmond, he heard, and rummaged in Jeff Davis' papers and put his feet on Jeff Davis' desk. So *he* had the key and it would have to be borrowed from him, if one wanted it. Johnny in his drunkenness heard all the talk of Richmond falling, heard it as the nervous child half asleep on the high-piled coats on the bed in the strange house hears the noisy merrymaking going on in other rooms.

He was still drunk when, six days later, the news came that Lee of the divine face had surrendered to Grant, Ulysses S. Grant, at Appomattox Courthouse. Johnny buried his head in his arms and that hour heard the war end, the always-playing music die like Rover dead all over, the toot-tooting, clang-clanging, chug-chugging engine screech to a stop that had tormented all the days and nights of four long years, and thought childishly that now, maybe, a person can get some sleep. . . .

As the gift of prophecy is mysteriously given and sometimes as mysteriously taken away in a mere matter of hours, before the clairvoyant can more than foretell a single happening, so Johnny's gift was taken from him and his old, regal talent for sobriety returned. He drank yet, outrageously, but for all the good it did him he might as well be lapping up the Potomac. He stayed completely sober. The last night he was ever drunk, and did not know whether he was afoot or ahorseback, was the night Ella—or was it David? or Lewis Payne?—came and took him out for a breath of fresh air. There was no air, no air at all, and the reason for that was—millions of people in all shapes, sizes and assorted colors, and horses caracoling and stomping, were all of them saying to each other, "The war is over! The war is over!" For this was the evening of the day of Appomattox when Grant and Lee met. And these people were greedily gulping the air so there was none left for anybody. They flooded the streets and it was hard to make way against their oncoming current. Better to turn like driftage and float the other way



from that which one intended, along with them, and on a green-sward under the little-leaved trees catch hold of a tree trunk while they eddied and slowly settled to a throbbing sea. Johnny, and it, had come, it then appeared, to see a man step out upon a balcony and give a speech.

The house he lived in was a white house, templelike. It had a curved porch to the front, with white pillars. He was very rich. He owned 3,026,789 square miles of land alone, to say nothing of chattels real and unreal, properties both movable and immovable, half interest in the sun, quarter interest in the moon, the whole of the yearly yield of stars and every second bison. Yet he was only twelve feet tall, not any bigger than two men if one man stood on the other man's shoulders. He had two eyes, a nose, several warts, a short beard, cranky dark hair, two ears, and his tie was on crooked. He had tails to his coat that fluttered to one side behind him in the breeze, two hands that held the white papers he read from.

He made a long speech. The last time Johnny was ever drunk in his life he stood hanging onto this tree trunk in the sea and heard this man make that long speech. It didn't make sense because it was half English, half Eleusinian, half Orphic Greek and half Domboshowan; and then, he read it so badly, he didn't breathe right, he didn't know the art of elocution, how the sound has to start down deep in the chest in order to have volume. Ned Spangler, the stage carpenter at Ford's, even Peanuts John, could read it better. Some of it sounded like this in the many languages:

We meet this evening not in sorrow, but in gladness of heart. The evacuation of Petersburg and Richmond, and the surrender of the principal insurgent army, give hope of a righteous and speedy peace, whose joyous expression can not be restrained. In the midst of this, however, He from whom all blessings flow must not be forgotten. . . .

We all agree that the seceded States, so called, are out of their proper practical relation with the Union, and that the sole object of the Government, civil and military, in regard to those States, is to again get them into that proper relation. I believe that it is not only possible, but in fact easier, to do this without deciding or even considering whether these

States have ever been out of the Union, than with it. Finding themselves safely at home, it would be utterly immaterial whether they had ever been abroad. . . .

It is also . . . unsatisfactory to some that the elective franchise is not given to the colored man. I would myself prefer that it were now conferred on the very intelligent, and on those who serve our cause as soldiers. Still, the question is not whether the Louisiana Government, as it stands, is quite all that is desirable. The question is, will it be wiser to take it as it is and help to improve it, or to reject and disperse it? . . .

The colored man, too, in seeing all united for him, is inspired with vigilance and energy, and daring, to the same end. Grant that he desires the elective franchise, will he not attain it sooner by saving the already advanced steps toward it than by running backward over them? Concede that the new government of Louisiana is only what it should be as the egg is to the fowl, we shall sooner have the fowl by hatching the egg than by mashing it. . . .

. . . it may be my duty to make some new announcement. . . . I am considering, and shall not fail to act when satisfied that action will be proper. . . .

It took a *great* while. Johnny nearly went to sleep.

"Johnny, Johnny?"

Somebody kept saying his name in his ear most annoyingly. He was going nightward with someone, David or someone. He craned his neck painfully to see who it might be. It was David with no edges. "Whatcha after me alla time for?" he demanded.

"Was that true what those men was saying, Johnny?"

"Wha' men?"

"Those men back there on the corner."

"Whish corner?"

"Back there. They was saying Lincoln's speech means nigger citizenship. The niggers are going to get to vote, they said. Is that true, Johnny?"

"Wha' true?"

"That the niggers are going to be citizens now like white folks

and vote and everything? Like Lincoln said? Is it, Johnny?"

Johnny stood swaying, trying to remember who had put a curse on him and why.

"Johnny, did Lincoln—"

Lincoln, of course. That's who it was. "By God, yes," he said. "He said it. He was crumpling the rose. . . . I heard him myself. By God, I'm going to kill him!"

But delivered into Ella's arms he did not remember this, did not remember where he had been.

"Were you out in that terrible crush of people, darling? I wonder how you could get through it," she said.

"Breath . . . of fresh air. . . ." he said thickly.

She took his hat and coat and made him comfortable, then sat down beside him. "My," she said, making conversation, "isn't the noise terrible?"

"Wha' noise?"

"Why, outside. All the celebrating and excitement because the war's over. A person can hardly hear himself think."

He sat very still, listening. For the first time that day he heard and recognized for what it was the mighty uproar of victory.

No one can blame a man who is so drunk he does not know whether he is riding or walking. No one can blame him for not deciding what he is supposed to do with his life. They blame him for being drunk in the first place, but they do not blame him for not solving his problems. A cold sober man they blame. The cold sober man does, himself. That is one of the severe pains of cold sobriety. Johnny tried to fix that when he woke on the morning of April 12th, but the talent for intoxication was as strangely gone as it had come, and he was delivered as to a jailer to his conscience, his ego, his vanity, the three ravaging and separate minds of each. They shot questions he had to answer and could not answer, all through the day, all through the night, never let up, made demands on him he could not fill, all day, all night, accused, pleaded, ordered, threatened. Perfectly sober, he kept saying *give me time, give me time*, and of all days and nights these were the most horrible and the longest he had ever spent.

So was the whole day of the thirteenth, but in Ella's arms for the

last time on the night of that day, while it rained outside and the curtains blowing inward were draggletailed with rain, he made a promise. As though he had found the name of their deity, shouted it and stopped them in their tracks before they overcame him, his enemies were repelled. Peace came. The clamoring tongue of the separate minds of those furies, his conscience, ego, vanity, hushed still beneath his sudden incantation: *Tomorrow I will decide.*

"Decide what?" Ella whispered, stroking back his hair.

"Everything," he said. In wonderful good spirits he sat up, laughing. "Oh, Ella," he said, turning to her eyes so bright she shut her own against them, "to *know*. Finally to know which way to turn!"

"Will you tell me?" she begged timidly.

"Of course I'll tell you. Tomorrow."

"You promise? You won't forget to come and tell me?"

"I give you my solemn promise!"

She pulled his hand up to her cheek, kissed it, as though tomorrow it would lead her to where she had always wanted to go. She didn't know the name of the place, or where it was, but he would take her there.

He had a remarkable sense of well-being when he woke on the morning of April 14th, as in the days of his boyhood when, because the great King Agesilaus of Sparta once did, he slept without a pillow on a hard mattress and woke with the faces of the June roses looking in at him through the wide-opened window. The rain had stopped. Outside, the air smelled of lilacs. He went home and bathed and dressed, whistling. He sang some of the words of "Fair, Fair with Golden Hair" and "I'm Going Away by de Light ob de Moon."

This was the day he would know with perfect certainty what to do. He did not have to think it out himself. An amnesty had been declared upon him. The answer to all his problems would be sent, it would arrive today, drop down from the sky. Attention: Mr. John Wilkes Booth.

He went downstairs and breakfasted in the National Hotel dining room. He was very hungry, but he ordered more than he could eat. There were many mirrors and he saw himself in every one. While



the coffee cooled too much, he contemplated his face seriously, re-evaluating it even higher than before. When he beckoned and the waiter padded over softly, he started to say, "Has the message come yet?" but it was too soon and the waiter would not know. "Bring me a cup of hot coffee, please," he said.

He thought of asking the newsboy, but didn't. He bought a paper, yesterday's paper, which disappointed him because the fragrance was gone from it, and strolled down the street reading about Montgomery, Alabama, more meticulously about a coffee substitute called Grain-O whose satisfied customer, Mrs. Geo. R. Brown, wrote in to say, "I didn't like it at all at first but the more I drank it, the better I liked it, and now I wouldn't drink anything else." He read that in New Orleans cotton was forty-two cents a pound and good, superfine flour nine dollars a barrel.

The barbershop seemed an extraordinarily good place to be, warm with sunlight, the leather of the barber chair hot with it so that it made a delightful seat on such a fresh, cool morning. The barber was a wonderfully clean, bald-headed man. With sure hands he plied the dangerous razor, wrung the steaming towel, shook out the chilling drops of witch hazel, while Johnny, so comfortable, so charmed, began to recite for him as in conversation all the old slogans of the once-glorious Confederacy.

"It ain't the best policy now, though," the barber said.

"What isn't?" A bar of sun went through a blue glass bottle and flowed uphill to make a tiny washing pool tinted palest blue upon the ceiling. Johnny watched it dreamily.

"Why, to say all them things now, you know, about the North, and Lincoln, and all that. The war's over, and least said, soonest mended. I guess folks would just as soon forget as remember, now."

"Oh, I don't know," Johnny said idly. A young fly crawled into the wavering pool, dragged its legs and thin wings through it.

He wanted to ask the barber if the message from the skies had come yet, but didn't.

He bought some roasted chestnuts from an Italian on the curb. He almost said "Has word come?" but he doubted if the man could speak English. Genially he said as he walked away, "*Buenas noches*," and not till he got to the corner did it occur to him that



this was Spanish, and not *good morning* as he had intended, but *good night*. He gave the chestnuts to a little boy in the next block who did not know about the message. He would have bought hyacinths or woodbine from the old flower vendor if she could have told him anything, but he was sure she could not. He tipped his hat to her, however, and said poetically, "Good morrow."

He took a long stroll, waiting. Not thinking, under general pardon, waiting. Not worried, waiting. The news would come, telling him what to do.

He came back roundabout down Tenth Street and stopped at Ford's Theater to get his mail. He liked to have it come there, it kept him in touch with the profession. Harry Ford saw him coming and said to the other loungers in front of the building, "Here comes the handsomest man in Washington."

Johnny greeted them.

He had quite a lot of mail and sat down on the steps in the warm sunshine to read it, not forgetting, though, not forgetting for a moment that word would come. He tore off the end of an envelope, slid the letter out and unfolded it.

"General Hill was certainly killed—" one man said, taking up where he had left off when interrupted.

"I never heard so," another man argued.

"He *was* killed. I read it myself with my own eyes."

Killed.

Who was killed?

Johnny looked up, then back down at his letter.

"You're talking about General Fitz Lee. Fitz Lee was killed, not General Hill. You want to kill off everybody."

Kill. Kill.

The word reverberated in Johnny's head. He read on, turned the page, waiting.

"They *both* was killed, Fitz Lee and Hill. I can prove it." The man sounded angry.

"You want to kill off everybody."

Kill off. Kill.

Johnny blinked.

Just in front of him and a little to one side Harry Ford was

pursuing his own quiet conversation with an acquaintance. "So anyway," Johnny heard him saying, "Lincoln is coming to the show tonight."

Who?

Lincoln. Lincoln, Abraham Lincoln. This word reverberated, too, so now there were two words.

"Is he coming with Robert E. Lee?"

Everybody laughed, and the two who had been arguing stopped it, to get in on this new conversation.

"No, with Grant. But I wouldn't put anything past Lincoln!"

Lincoln.

Now what was the first word again? A very, very easy word—Kill.

Johnny caught his breath.

Together, sounding together in his brain, the words said something. They made sense! Did they? What did they say?

Kill—Lincoln. That was what they said.

Johnny scrambled to his feet.

The message. That was it. It had come down from the sky. Attention: Mr. John Wilkes Booth:

KILL LINCOLN.

He started off rapidly. He had work to do. He could not loiter here.

---

# XVII

*"And the fifth angel sounded, and I saw a star fall from heaven unto the earth: and to him was given the key to the bottomless pit. And he opened the bottomless pit; and there arose a smoke out of the pit, as the smoke of a great furnace; and the sun and the air were darkened. . . ."*

—REVELATIONS

---

**H**AS HE been full of folly? Johnny now has got the word he waited for. He knows exactly what to do and how to do it!

The first thing he did was to step down the street to the Kirkwood House to pay a call upon Vice-President Andrew Johnson. He was not acquainted with Vice-President Andrew Johnson, but he wanted to get a military pass from him so that once he started off he could ride straight down through Maryland without being stopped. He said to the long-haired desk clerk, "John Wilkes Booth calling to see Vice-President Johnson."

"To my knowledge, he is not in, sir," the young man said.

"If you will be so good as to see he gets this note, then, please." He reached for a pen, dipped it into the ink and on a card from his cardcase wrote in a firm hand, "Don't wish to disturb you; are you at home? J. Wilkes Booth."

Then he went over to the Herndon House to see Lewis Payne. "We will meet at six tonight," he said. "Is it all right if we use your room?"

Lewis Payne told him George Atzerodt was back in town for a few days from Port Tobacco and was staying at the Kirkwood House. Also, he expected to see David Herold in the afternoon, he said. He was delighted to see Johnny looking so well, acting like his old self again.

"In that case, when you see him, tell David to be here tonight for the meeting," Johnny said. "I'll drop around and tell George. I have to go back to the Kirkwood House again anyway. And I'll tell John Surratt, too. So there'll be five of us—you, me, David, George and John. Just like old times."

But John Surratt was not at home. His mother said regretfully, flushing with delight when she saw her distinguished visitor, "I'm so sorry, Mr. Booth, but John is not at home. He's gone up to Canada."

John was sorry, too.

"Won't you come in, Mr. Booth? You're quite a stranger. We've missed you." She opened the door wide enough so that this handsome, famous, rich and good young man could come in and marry Anna if he wanted to.

"I haven't much time," he said.

"Well, I haven't either," she confessed. "I was just starting to get ready to go home to tend to some business. But *do* please come another time, and *do* please come soon."

"Home?" he said, puzzled.

"Out to Surrattsville. That's where we lived so many years. You know, the inn there. It's an inn now, but it used to be our family home. We told you."

"Oh, yes," he said, "how stupid of me." Surrattsville, of course. The inn where David left the carbines and rope the day the kidnaping plot fell through and he was afraid to bring them back into town. Johnny would be going through there tonight himself! "When are you leaving?" he asked.

"Pretty soon," she said. "One of my boarders is going to drive me. Louis Weichmann. You remember him. Although you're *such* a stranger," she added archly.

"I wonder, as long as you're going out to Surrattsville, if you could leave a little package for me with Mr. Lloyd at the inn?" he said. "Would I have time to go back to my hotel and get it before you leave?"

"Most assuredly," she said. "I'd be glad to oblige. You just take your time. Very glad to do it, Mr. Booth, no trouble at all. *Pleased* to do it." Her lips quite trembled and her eyes beamed.

"Well, I'll be right back," he said.

He returned to his room at the National Hotel and pulled a suitcase out from under the bed. Then he squatted down, opened it and in a corner found what he was looking for—a pair of field glasses. He shut the suitcase, shoved it back under the bed, stood up and wondered where he could find some paper. He found some in a drawer and made the neat-looking package that was to slip the hood over the head and tie the rope around the neck of the first woman ever hanged by the United States Government.

On his way back from Mrs. Surratt's he stopped at Pumphrey's livery stable across the street from the rear of the hotel. It was cool and dark inside, with an oblong of golden light upon the floor from the open doors, smelling of warm manure and polished leather. There were soft stampings and other sounds of horses. A man came forward out of the gloom, a lazy, fat little dog behind him who immediately lay down flat in the sunshine. "Ah, Mr. Booth," he said, recognizing his customer. "How can we serve you today, sir? You're quite a stranger."

"I want that sorrel I usually ride," Johnny said. "I'll want her about four this afternoon."

"What a shame," the man said. "The sorrel's in use for all day."

"Bother," Johnny said. "Well, what do you have for me then?"

"I'll tell you, sir," the man said, thinking hard. "There's a nice little bay mare that I know would suit you fine."

(She's a bright little bay with black legs, black mane, black tail and white star on her forehead like Hesperus. But she's a rocker, Johnny. She'll be hell for a man with a broken leg to ride. And fast as she travels, fast as she flies, she cannot outrun death.)

"All right," Johnny said. "I'll be back this afternoon."

He met Mrs. Surratt's boarder just outside her house. Louis Weichmann was on his way to get a horse and buggy for the trip out to Surrattsville. They greeted each other and Johnny ran up the steep front stairs and knocked lightly at the door. Really, Mrs. Surratt was *very* glad to deliver the package to Mr. Lloyd, she said. It was no trouble at all! And she did hope Mr. Booth wouldn't be such a stranger around here in future.

"I won't indeed," Johnny promised.



Now he went to the alley behind Ford's Theater where there was a small stable owned by an actor named Maddox. Johnny found Maddox and asked permission to shelter his little mare there through the afternoon and evening. They had a drink together in Peter Taltavul's saloon.

After lunch, about two-thirty, he was again in the alley. An old Negro woman looking out the door of her house, saw him. She looked "right wishful at him," she said. And no wonder. If the Quakeress had seen him she must still have said, as she said of the half-grown boy, that he was as fresh as a new-blown rose with the dew upon it. He was talking to some of the members of the cast, an old friend of his father's among them. Inside, the rest of the company was practicing a patriotic song composed by the orchestra director for that night's performance. It did not sound like a very good song through the open doorway and reminded one tantalizingly of other patriotic songs. When they got through practicing and left, Johnny and one or two of the others went inside the theater.

Somebody was hammering up in box number seven. Johnny went upstairs and found that it was Ed Spangler, the stage carpenter, and Peanuts John, who could turn his hand to anything, taking out the partitions between boxes seven and eight to throw them into one for the President's party. Johnny knew Ed Spangler well, he had come out to The Farm to do some building for his father when Johnny was a little boy. He bought the carpenter a drink every once in a while in memory of those days.

He jiggled the doorknob of the first door into the boxes while he watched them work. "Feels loose," he said.

"Does it?" Ed Spangler said. He was sweating and took his jacket off and hung it over the red velvet back of the finely upholstered rocking chair. The weight of it made it rock gently back and forth.

"Don't you know that's bad luck?" Peanuts John said. "To rock an empty chair? Means somebody's going to die. Besides, Mr. Ford'll be awful mad if you get it dirty."

"I won't get it dirty," Ed Spangler said.

Johnny worked the doorknob some more, his eyes on the oppo-

site boxes. Then he strolled across the floor of the box, lifted an edge of the draped lace curtains and rested his hands on the wide, velvet-padded railing. He stared down. Deserted, the stage seemed a vast area a long way down. But it wasn't so far. He could make a jump like that. He did not notice the flag decorating the front of the box, caught up in the middle with a picture of Washington. He gazed out over the dark auditorium, the rows upon rows of empty seats, but they were not empty. . . . Two thousand ghostly faces bloomed there. He flexed his knees a little and looked back down at the stage. He could make a jump like that without turning a hair.

He strolled back to the Kirkwood House to see Vice-President Johnson but was told he hadn't come in yet. So he went up to George Atzerodt's room and told him to come to the Herndon House at six o'clock. "We're going to have a meeting," he said.

"I thought we was all done with that kidnaping scheme," George said doubtfully. "I promised my girl we was all done with it."

"This is something different," Johnny said. "A lot different and a lot better. We're not going to do any kidnaping."

On his way to Pumphrey's stable to pick up the little bay mare he stopped and had some brandy. Outside the stable he met a colonel he knew slightly.

"You hear Johnson's speech the other day?" the Colonel asked him. "Outside Willard's Hotel?"

"No," Johnny said.

"You should have. It was a damned good speech."

"I can imagine," Johnny said politely. "It's a wonder somebody doesn't blow out his brains sometime when he's making one of his lovely speeches."

A quavering old man sunning himself against the building began to flutter and scold. "It looks to me like we've had *enough*," he fretted. "Haven't people had enough of blowing people's brains out? Aren't we all sick of it? Can't anybody talk about anything but shooting, shooting, shooting?"

Johnny glanced at him, then looked at the Colonel and smiled and winked, but got no smile in return.

The little mare was a beauty. "How about a tie-rein to hitch her

with?" Johnny asked the liveryman when he came leading her out, the lazy little dog at his heels. "I might want to stop and get a drink."

"Oh, you can't hitch her," the man said apologetically. "She'll break her bridle every time in the world."

"Well, what can I do then?"

"The best is to get a boy to hold her for you. That's the best, Mr. Booth."

"But suppose there's no boy in sight?" Johnny asked, annoyed.

"Oh, there's sure to be, Mr. Booth. Why, you can't hardly step, for bootblacks underfoot. You can always find a bootblack that will hold her."

Johnny bit his lip, considering. "Well, I'm going to write a letter now, and leave the mare in a stable close by, so she won't need to be tied for the time being. I was thinking about later—"

"The best is to get you a boy."

Johnny sighed. Then, "Say, where's a good place for a ride?" The man scratched his head. "Well, now, you'd ought to know, Mr. Booth. You must of rode around to most of the places. Crystal Springs is nice, for instance. Although it may be a little early for it."

"I may ride out there when I get my letter done," Johnny said. He mounted expertly.

He had his letter done and in his pocket when he saw an old acquaintance, an actor named John Matthews. "Hello," he called, riding in close to the curb and halting his horse.

The actor slackened his pace and elbowed his way through the afternoon throng, over to the edge of the sidewalk. "Hello, yourself," he said. "You're a sight for sore eyes, I must say."

"Do me a favor, will you, Matthews?" Johnny said, taking out a large envelope from inside his coat and handing it down to him. "If I don't come by for this tomorrow afternoon by one o'clock, take it over to the office of the *National Intelligencer*, will you? I want it delivered to the editor in person."

"What is it?" John Matthews said. "My *Travels Through Darkest Africa*?"

Johnny laughed. "They'll print this quicker," he said.

He did not ride out to Crystal Springs but instead went down Tenth Avenue again. He drew rein in front of Ferguson's café, a small restaurant next door to Ford's Theater. Maddox was sitting on the steps there and at that moment Ferguson himself pushed open the door and came out.

"Just see what a horse I've got," Johnny called out to them. "Now, watch this. Just watch her. She can run like a cat." He touched his spurs to her lightly and she bounded away.

"Handsome cuss," Ferguson said, looking after them. Then he gazed up at the sky. "Ain't it a day, though? Sweetest weather in the world."

It was, after last night's rain. It was clear as crystal, clear as a bell, that large, light day of Good Friday.

Johnny galloped the bay around a few blocks and then rode into the alley back of Ford's Theater. This time he dismounted and led her over to the half-open back door. He stuck his head in. "Spangler!" he called. "Bring out a halter, will you?"

Another stagehand appeared in a moment, a halter in his hand. "He's busy right now," he said, "but here's a halter that was hanging in the corridor."

Spangler appeared right behind him. "What you want, Johnny?" he said, coming outside. He took the halter and deftly put it on the little bay, who jerked her head like a girl who doesn't want her hair combed. "Awful nice little horse, ain't she?" He reached up to take her saddle off.

"Don't bother, Ned," Johnny said. "Let's leave her saddled and bridled. She *is* nice, isn't she? But she's a bad little bitch," he added fondly, as though he had been acquainted with her a long time. But after Spangler went back in he put her in the stable, took the saddle off, locked the door behind him and went into the theater.

Maddox was in there, and Johnny invited him, Spangler and Peanuts John to go next door to Peter Taltavul's saloon for a drink. When they parted, the large, light weather was growing smaller and a few scattered drops of rain were beginning to fall. The men went to their early suppers, and Johnny walked around to the alley by himself, opened the back door of the theater and stepped softly in.



"Anybody here?" he called softly.

No one was there at all.

It was as quiet as the grave.

He knew where Spangler kept his toolbox and got the tools he needed. Then he went upstairs and inside the little corridor that led to boxes seven and eight. He bored a gimlet hole in the door to box number seven, bent his head slightly and squinted through it. Then he reamed the edges with his penknife. He loosened the screws on the keepers of the locks to both inner doors, so that if they were locked that night he could just push and get in. He had picked up a suitable length of wood, and now scraped a groove in the wall next to the corridor door. This could be slipped into place, when the time came, and the door effectively barred. He tried it out, then brushed his hands together and flicked some whitish dust off the sleeve of his coat. Then he went back and put his eye up against the tiny hole again. He could see the whole interior of the box. The red-upholstered chair seemed to be rocking a little back and forth, but of course that was just a trick of vision.

At six o'clock sharp he was knocking on Lewis Payne's door in the Herndon House. David was already there and George Atzerodt came a few moments later.

"As you know," Johnny began, remaining on his feet, when they had all taken seats, "for six months we worked to capture. Nothing, however, my friends, was thought of sacrificing until today—for our country's wrongs!"

They looked at each other, puzzled.

But Johnny went on magnificently. Not only did he know what to do, he knew what to think, as though it were all written down for him in a book, like a part in a play, and he had learned it by heart. "Tonight," he said, "something decisive and great must be done. We must strike boldly for our country, with brave hearts."

Lewis Payne slowly nodded his head.

"Our country?" David asked, pulling at his ear lobe.

George Atzerodt coughed nervously.

"Yes, our country," Johnny said gently. "All her troubles are owed to one man, but there are others who do her grave wrong.



Do you love this forced Union? No, nor I. Do you love the tyrant who rules her with an iron hand? No, nor I. Do you love the man who keeps her in the chains of tyranny? No, nor I. But in our hearts we are patriots, we think as free men. And if we think we must realize . . . that the time has come, as it came to Brutus, as it came to William Tell, as it came to Charlotte Corday, to strike the blow. I am ready—not for gain, for I want nothing—not for revenge, for I have no private wrong, but because I am a PATRIOT!" He was letter perfect in the role.

He recited without a hitch for over half an hour, and when he ceased, and stood there, his two hands on the back of a chair, gazing down on them with his hypnotic eyes, they were convinced that every word he spoke was true. As Johnny said, a blow must be struck for their country. Deep as was this conviction, however, David Herold had so far never killed anything but a partridge and George Atzerodt was scared of blood, so these two begged reluctantly to be excused from assassinating Secretary of War Stanton and Vice-President Johnson, the tasks Johnny had assigned them.

It was different with Lewis Payne. The job Johnny gave him to do was to murder Secretary of State Seward within the next three hours, and he said he would do it gladly. He had been a brave soldier and knew the old familiar face of death as well as he knew the faces of the two dead brothers who came to keep him reproachful company in the dark hours of night. "If you think it has to be done," he said.

"For our country, Lewis. The way I've just been saying."

Johnny did not scold David Herold, for he was very young. He let him off from killing Secretary of War Stanton and gave him orders, instead, to accompany Lewis Payne to the Seward mansion, where he was to wait outside. After that, Lewis and David were to gallop to the river, cross the Navy Yard Bridge and meet Johnny, who would be waiting for them in the little grove at the top of Good Hope Hill, just out of Anacostia, Maryland.

"It will be easy," Johnny told Lewis Payne. "David will stay outside and hold your horse while you go in. All you have to do is to say you are from the apothecary's. As you know, Mr. Seward has a broken collarbone and is in bed. He fell out of his carriage

the other day, and he's still in bed, probably in one of the upstairs bedrooms. All you have to do is to say you're from the apothecary's with medicine for Mr. Seward, and explain that you have been instructed to mix it and administer it yourself. The butler will let you in. Once you're inside all you have to do is to go upstairs to Mr. Seward's bedroom. There, think of our glorious country in the hands of such despots as Lincoln—and Stanton—and Seward—and strike to kill!"

He rebuked George Atzerodt for his cowardice. The poor carriage painter looked miserable under the withering blast, but he only repeated stubbornly, "I couldn't hit the side of a barn door, honest I couldn't, Johnny." However, he finally promised to "make a try." He promised he would "make a try" at getting into Vice-President Johnson's room at the Kirkwood House (if he were at home) and "make a try" at assassinating him.

"At ten, then," Johnny said. "We must all dispatch our separate duties as close upon the hour of ten as possible, and then meet over in Maryland on top of Good Hope Hill as soon afterward as we can make it."

He gave Lewis Payne money for the hire of three horses, one for each of them, and briefly repeated his instruction. "May God be with us this night," he finished. He remembered Asia's old history book, and her reading aloud while he lay in the grass at her feet. "And the day of the Battle of Edgehill broke, and the knight fell to his knees. 'Lord,' prayed he, 'Thou knowest how busy I must be this day. If I forget Thee, do not Thou forget me.'"

George Atzerodt fumbled for his handkerchief and unhappily blew his nose. "I may have caught a—little cold," he apologized. "I ought to be home in bed."

"Glory, Johnny," David said, slapping his knees. "We'll know we *done* something, won't we? I don't think I'll go home for supper," he decided. "I hate fish balls."

Lewis Payne spoke as one soldier to another, standing tall and looking straight into Johnny's eyes. "I will do my best," he said.

"I know you will, my lad," Johnny said. "I know you will."

He took even greater trouble than usual with his toilet that evening. He bathed, shaved again, put on a handsome linen shirt,

thick silk cravat and got into his best black broadcloth suit. It had tight trousers, a rather long and well-fitting frock coat, and he wore a brocaded vest. He put on a pair of fine leather riding boots that went halfway up his thigh, and added silver spurs.

He looked at himself a long time in the mirror, stepped far enough back so he could see himself full length. The riding boots with the dress suit gave him just the look of drama he wanted. He walked over to the closet and, after several moments' speculation, finally chose a hat from the shelf. When he returned to the mirror and tried it on and then stepped back to get the long view again, he saw it was exactly right. It was a soft black hat and the brim dipped a little over his right eye. Next time he went up close to the mirror it was not to inspect the details of his costume but to see his face. . . . Not a hair of his but what he knew as the scholar knew his many alphabets; no astronomer was better acquainted with Sirius and Aldebaran than he with his eyes; no geographer more familiar with France, with Spain, than he with his nose and chin. Saluting himself as lover salutes lover ("Till then, I salute you with a significant look, that you do not forget me"), he turned away and got his gold-mounted derringer from the dresser drawer, such a small gun it could be hidden in the hand, and rummaged and found the bright dagger with AMERICA, LIBERTY, INDEPENDANCE engraved upon the handle.

He strolled down to Tenth Street and into Peter Taltavul's saloon next door to Ford's Theater for a leisurely drink. The rain that had begun to fall in earnest while he was dressing had stopped, but the cobblestone streets shone like lumpy satin from the wetting. Ford's Theater looked busy, the front of the building was lit up famously. The whole block had a bright, famous look because of the theater in the middle, where people in their best clothes were driving up in their carriages, stopping in front by the low platform, getting out under the golden street lamp and going in.

At a little after nine he unlocked the stable door in the alley back of Ford's, went in and saddled the bay mare. He led her out and up to the rear door of the theater. The door was closed so he opened it and called, not loudly, "Spangler! Spangler!" several times.

An actor named Debonay came down the passageway. "You

want somebody?" he said. Behind him, like the noise of the sea, came the distant rumble of the audience's laughter, then silence, then laughter again.

"Tell Spangler I want him, will you?" Johnny said. "I want him to hold my horse for me. She won't stay hitched."

Debonay had been trying to see who it was in the darkness. "Oh, it's you, Booth," he said. "Righto." He turned and went back.

When Spangler came out he said, "I can't hold her but a little while, Johnny, but give me the reins. I got too much on hand to dast stay out here long."

Johnny went inside and bumped into Debonay again. The play was going on. He could hear murmuring bits of dialogue. He took the actor by the arm and asked him softly, "What's the chances of getting across the stage right now?"

"None," Debonay said, "that I know of. The dairy scene's on."

"I'll go underneath," Johnny said, and opened the door to his left. He went down the short flight of dimly lit stairs and disappeared under the stage.

Debonay, whose part gave him almost nothing to do, again meandered to the back door and stuck his head out.

Spangler said, "Say, Mr. Debonay, won't you please find Peanuts John and tell him to come outside and hold this horse for me? The next scene's coming up and I got too much to do to stand around out here."

"Why don't you tie her?"

"She busts her bridle, Mr. Booth says, but I got to go back in. Mr. Ford'll be mad as hops."

Debonay went back in and found Peanuts John who appeared rather unwillingly in the doorway a few moments later. "I was told by Mr. Ford to stand by the stage door and keep people out that ain't got no business backstage," he said. "I can't hold no horse. I ain't supposed to be out here in the first place."

"You come on out here and hold her," Spangler said. "If anybody says anything to you, I'll take the blame."

"Well, all right," Peanuts John said, taking the reins and reaching up to pat the little bay's nose, "but you just be sure you do, if anybody says anything. You say it wasn't my fault." When Spangler



went into the theater and closed the door behind him, the boy led the horse closer to the building so he could seat himself on the carpenter's bench by the back door. He swung his feet up and stretched out full length, the reins doubled around his left hand, and lay there so comfortably that he nearly dozed off to sleep.

When the second act of *Our American Cousin* was over, intermission began. During it, Johnny was next door in Peter Taltavul's saloon having a drink of brandy, but he did not linger over it. He saw the long hand of the clock measure out the wedge-shaped minutes with little jerks and counted them, piece after piece.

He was back in the theater lobby by the door when the last of the well-dressed stragglers wandered back to their seats. He watched them, exchanging a few idle words with the doorkeeper. The curtain rose on the first scene of the third act. Johnny went back to the saloon and took his last drink in Washington, that one for the short, winding and fatal road he was to travel. Then he wiped his lips, ran his middle finger over the silken edges of his mustache and turned away from the bar.

He drew a deep breath, straightened his shoulders, pushed open the swinging doors and went out into the damp spring night.

It was only a few steps to the door of the theater. . . .

He lies now in Cox's grove, on Easter Sunday morning, and it is raining. Wrapped in his thin blanket, his bent arm under his head, he sleeps the sleep of exhaustion, while we consider him.

What set him apart for this fate of his?

To find the answer, we went back to the very beginning and straight through his twenty-six years, as the heirs go through the bureaus and bandboxes of the dead, sorting out all his days. And now we know everything.

It may be, however, that in a trunk in an attic there is an envelope marked: THE UNFATHOMABLE WILL OF THE UNFATHOMABLE WILL, or in some secret drawer a box (full of hundreds upon hundreds of numbers, each written upon a separate slip of paper) with the words scrawled across the top: THE CAUSE OF GODS AND DEMONS.

If so, his name is there and in these lie the last and the uttermost secrets.



---

# XVIII

*"Why, I was writing of my epitaph;  
It will be seen tomorrow. . . ."*

—Timon of Athens: SHAKESPEARE

---

DAVID awoke first, when twilight was falling, and went to see if the horses, concealed farther back in the woods, were safe. He heard them cropping the wet grass and pulling at the leaves. By some miracle the little bay was still tied to the stout limb, but she did not like her hiding place. She gave a whinny and a snort to show her feelings. David came up to her and patted her neck. "Poor old girl," he said softly, "don't you mind. We'll soon be on our way over to Virginia." She turned her head toward him and he saw the dark flash of her eyes. "Although I don't know how we'll get you across the river," he said, "but we'll think of some way. Don't you stand here and fret about it." She began to nudge and nudge his shoulder as though he were an old friend and he put his arm up around her neck in a sudden warm rush of affection. "You little old no-account," he said, "I never seen nobody forwarder than you." Then he stepped over a fallen log and went over to pat the other horse so as not to hurt her feelings. "How are you, girlie?" he said.

Johnny dreamed . . . he was taking part in the old choosing game, Lady Fair, and whichever direction he moved, wherever he danced, somebody was always bumping into his sore leg. It annoyed him and hurt frightfully, but he couldn't seem to keep out of the way. While he sang along with the rest (many ladies, many men in blue uniforms, a gypsy in red and yellow skirts and one very tall man in a black suit)—remembering all the words—

In this ring is a lady fair,  
Dark brown eyes and curly hair,  
Rosy cheeks and dimpled chin,  
Take someone and choose them in.

Now you're married and married for life,  
La, la, la, what a pretty little wife,  
Pretty little wife and husband too,  
Kiss him twice if once won't do!

he kept trying to reach down and rub his leg, that they *would* kick, and *would* bump into.

He woke with a start when David broke a twig with a sharp snap. He sat straight up, the words of the old song still echoing in his head. "David?" he called, looking all around. It was twilight outside on the road, lit with polished stars, but very dark in the thicket.

"I've been to see the horses," David said, unexpectedly close by. He sat down heavily on his blanket.

"Had she broken her bridle?"

"No," David said, yawning. "Glory, I'm cold," he announced. "It's awful coolish in here among the trees. Wisht we could build a fire. If Colonel Cox is going to send somebody with something to eat, wisht he'd do it."

Johnny scraped a sulphur match into a spurt of bluish flame that smoked thickly, and lit his pipe, taking a deep puff. He ran his hand down his leg to his ankle but it was too tender to rub, too sore to rest his fingers on. He smiled a little, thinking of the clumsy dancers in his dream.

"Johnny, don't you wisht they was nicer to us the way we thought they'd be?"

"Who was nicer?" Johnny asked.

"Oh, the rebels. We done—you done 'em a favor. They couldn't stand the sight of Mr. Lincoln, they just hated him, and now look how they go and do. Make us lay out in the cold. I wisht—" He paused, listening.

"Be still," Johnny whispered. "Listen, David. There's somebody coming down the road."

They sat quiet while the soft footsteps came closer, closer, and then stopped.

There came a low whistle, a pause, a low whistle.

"It's Cox's man," Johnny murmured, "but take your gun, just in case. Find out for sure."

David reached for the carbine, got to his feet and started moving cautiously to where the grove opened onto the road.

The man who stood there waiting for him was slender, straight-backed, middle-aged Thomas Jones, a foster brother of Colonel Cox's. He had been a signal agent for the Confederacy through the war and was used to taking risks. His job was to transport south-bound mail and passengers across the river, often under the very noses of the gunboats that cruised up and down it. The mail he brought back from Virginia he left in a three-pronged stump a mile from the river to be picked up by other agents who carried it on. That stump was very near the spot where Lincoln's assassin was now hidden. Jones, while he stood there waiting, turned his head in the direction of it, remembering those nights of danger not so long ago.

A voice asked softly from the thicket, "Who are you?" and Jones went toward it instantly.

"I am a friend," he said. He was—almost the sole friend they would meet with on their journey. "Name's Thomas Jones."

"Pleased to meet you, Mr. Jones," David said. Then he turned and led him, carrying food, brandy and another blanket, into the dark undergrowth. "This here's Mr. Jones, Johnny," he said.

Thomas Jones, accustomed to darkness, found the man sitting on the ground at once. He went up to him and put his hand down and took Johnny's surprised, unready hand and shook it. "I'm proud to meet you, Mr. Booth," he said. "Proud, sir."

Tears gathered in Johnny's eyes and he was glad of the darkness. He blinked, looking upward at a whitish blur that was this gentleman's face. "An honor and a pleasure, I'm sure," he faltered.

Of all hours, those of the morning went quickest. Every night faithful Jones brought food, brandy and the newspapers, and the

next morning Johnny read every word of them, sometimes twice or three times. He was always hopeful in the early part of the day, saying to himself and David that tonight they could probably cross the river and get over into Virginia. Every day he made his plans and looked forward to leaving. When late afternoon came, and Thomas Jones, pretending to look for hogs, arrived, bringing the bad news that the fugitives could not leave but would have to remain hidden in the grove, that lengthened the hours, especially when darkness fell. His hope dwindled then and the hours dragged on. Sometimes it seemed as though the night would never end.

It did, though, and morning came, and he could read the newspapers left him the night before. But his cheer came back only to vanish again at the end of the day.

With rapt interest he read all about the death of Lincoln, and the subsequent events connected with it. He was not astonished, as David seemed to be, that the assassination had caused such a hullabaloo, and yet sometimes it did amaze him that the whole country from one ocean to the other should be in turmoil because of it.

It annoyed him that the crime was laid at the door of the now-disrupted rebel government, and not upon himself alone who deserved all the credit. Jeff Davis and his Cabinet were the prime movers and they had instigated it, so the papers said. They went further and stated that the assassination was only part of the gigantic plot hatched by these same rebels to slay every Federal statesman and legislator, and that thousands of Confederates were involved in it. John Wilkes Booth, the papers reported, had performed the deed of murder as a hired assassin and at the bidding of the black-hearted villains who led the rebellion.

"Rubbish," Johnny said over and over. "Unspeakable rubbish. It's that demented hen of a Stanton. Why don't they publish my letter? That would explain the whole thing! What are they keeping it back for? Hired assassin, am I? They make me sick!"

"What letter, Johnny?" David asked, watching a woodcock on a flowering red-bush branch. He did want so badly to shoot at it but Johnny wouldn't let him. He said firing off a gun might bring unwanted visitors to their hiding place. But it wouldn't. What a

shame Johnny wouldn't let him. There were all kinds of things to shoot at. Down by the little stream from which he carried water for Johnny to drink and wash in, there were rats, and he saw a mink once, too. He wouldn't be surprised if there were deer around. Certainly there were foxes, a raccoon, a 'possum. There must be rabbits, too, and he had spied several bush-tailed squirrels. There were hawks, robins, bluebirds, starlings, redbirds, a mockingbird, and at night an owl that sent chills down David's back when it said in plain English from the windy black branches overhead: Who? Who? Who? It made him think of spirits coming back from the dead and he wondered where Lincoln's spirit was. Was it wandering all around without peace or rest or was it safe in heaven? He hoped it was in heaven and not wandering around, perhaps in this very grove, like the ghosts in stories. . . . It looked as if Johnny would at least let him take a shot at that owl, but no, sir. "What letter?" David repeated, sighing.

"I told you, David," Johnny explained patiently. "Friday afternoon I wrote a letter to the *National Intelligencer* saying what we were going to do and why we were going to do it. For our country, you remember."

David nodded.

"Well, after I wrote it," Johnny went on, "I met a fellow I knew on the Avenue, John Matthews, an actor, and I asked him if he would deliver the letter for me the next day to the newspaper office. I told him I wanted it delivered personally to the editor. He said he'd do it. At the end of the letter I signed all our names—mine, yours, Lewis Payne's and George Atzerodt's."

"Mine?" David asked happily.

"What I want to know—where is that letter? Why don't they publish it? What are they holding it back for?"

(It was burned up, that's where it was, but Johnny was never to know it. John Matthews was in Ford's Theater the night of the assassination. He could not get away fast enough, fairly flew, for at home was Wilkes Booth's dangerous letter. Locking his door behind him, pulling down the blinds and lighting his lamp with trembling fingers, he read it. Then he tore it up in little pieces, and fed them one by one to the fire in the stove.)



Early Tuesday a stranger appeared but gave Jones's whistle, pause, whistle, so they knew he must be a friend. He was Colonel Cox's overseer and he was carrying a gun. "The Colonel sent me to get rid of the horses," he announced.

David got to his feet, his knees starting to shake. "Get rid of them—how?" he asked.

"Shoot them," the man said. "The neighborhood's full of soldiers and detectives and Colonel Cox is afraid they'll betray your whereabouts."

"Can't he conceal them?" Johnny said. "Wouldn't Colonel Cox allow them to be turned in with his own horses?" He looked at David's grief-stricken face. "Isn't there some way—"

"Them horses is known like you fellows is known," the overseer said. "Their descriptions been give out everywhere, like your pictures been give out, in wholesale lots. I don't know how many soldiers has come up to Colonel Cox's and how many detectives. Why, them horses would be spotted so quick it would make your head swim."

"They're awful nice horses," David said, trying to keep his lips from quivering. Since Sunday night he had paid them many visits; it was something pleasant to do in this lonely place. The sweetest bonds are those welded in adversity and he had grown as fond of them as they of him. He liked taking a stroll through the thick brush every hour or two to pass the time of day with them. It shortened and lightened the tedious hours of waiting. They liked it, too, though he never stayed long. They would almost smile and say, "Here's David come to pay us a call."

"The little mare," David went on pleadingly, "she's what they call a rocker, but she's—so fast, and so gentle. She's an awful nice little horse, really she is. They both are. They're nice horses, ain't they, Johnny? Ain't that little bay a fine little mare?"

"That's not the point," Johnny said gently. "The point is, the horses are known, David, just like we're known, and as this gentleman says, with so many soldiers in the neighborhood, they're liable to betray us."

"But it don't look like they'd have to be shot for something they never done. *They* never committed no crime," David said. "Please, couldn't you—"

"Maybe you'd better come along with me, boy," the overseer said. "Colonel Cox wants it done and he wants it done fast."

Sickly, David went with him. He had to lead the bright little bay several hundred yards into the dense pines, the overseer leading the other horse. When the marsh began, the overseer took the reins out of his hands. David wanted to say good-by to her but kept silent, swallowing. The overseer mounted the other horse and led the little mare, who kept pulling back and looking around for David and rolling her eyes desperately while she plunged deeper into the leafy water, her skin rippling with fright. When the water was deep enough the rider climbed on a long limb that extended over it, and raised his gun, took careful aim, while the little mare kept looking back for David, plunging, neighing wildly, and the other horse neighed more wildly still and tried to leap out of the water . . . and the man shot once, twice. They sank quietly and quickly into the thick water, more quietly and quickly than seemed possible. David kept saying God damn you, sir, God damn you, sir, under his breath while the overseer was climbing in along the branch to firm ground, and he had his fists clenched tight.

That afternoon he went back to where the horses used to be and it was a forlorn place, as where a house you loved has stood and is now torn down and all the people you loved have gone away and left no word behind them to say which direction they took. Nobody was there to say "Here comes David. . . ." He never had had a horse of his own, but he would have liked a bay like the little mare with the white star on her forehead. He would have kept her shining like a nigger's heel, you can bet. He'd have—been nice to her, never used a crop, never used a spur, just leaned down low upon her neck and whispered, "Get going, girlie. . . ." He lay down under the tree she had been tied to, thinking of her, and he put his hands up over his face.

Johnny didn't notice his eyes were all red. Johnny never said a word about it.

Wednesday afternoon David looked up from the beetle on the ground he had been watching with great interest. "Say, Johnny," he said. "I meant to ask you. Why didn't you just stand behind the scenes and shoot up into the box? You're such a good shot, you

could of hit him from there, just as well as going up there and shooting him and then having to jump down on the stage in front of all the people? Then you wouldn't of got your leg broke," he said.

"What?" Johnny said, putting down his newspaper. His pain had told on him, the cold, the ennui, the discomfort, the long waiting to cross the river had told on him. He would have been surprised to see how thin he was, how deathly pale, and that the years he had not lived and would not live had set their marks upon his face. "What were you saying?" he asked, his eyes dropping back to the account of wholesale arrests: "The prisons overfloweth—full of 'suspects'—not conspirators alone, but their relatives, friends, acquaintances and persons having had dealings with them; proprietors of theaters and their employees; actors from the north, east, west; livery-stable keepers, telegraph operators, blockade runners, male and female; rebel scouts and spies; whole households with their menservants and maidservants, black and white, and the stranger within their gates." Mrs. Surratt had been arrested Monday night, at the same time as Lewis Payne. Mrs. Surratt, of all people! She was called a "conspirator." George Atzerodt, Michael O'Laughlin, Samuel Arnold, even Spangler had been imprisoned. There was a great hue and cry after John Surratt. It was too foolish for words. Why, only he himself and Lewis Payne had actually *done* anything. Johnny had succeeded and Lewis Payne had failed, for Secretary of State Seward did not die. But to read the newspapers you would think forty people had done forty separate assassinations, each one more terrible than the other. Johnny pushed the paper off his knee in disgust.

"Why, what I was saying, Johnny," David repeated, "was, why didn't you shoot from behind the scenes on the stage? You could of hit him, like I could hit that catbird up there right this minute if you'd just let me take a shot at him—"

"No," Johnny said.

"—so why did you take all them chances and go right up into the box where you'd have to jump down in front of all the people—when you could of drew a bead on him from lots farther off back of the wings and it would of been so much easier?" he said. "And you might not of broke your leg?"

"I didn't think of doing it that way," Johnny said.

I couldn't even have thought of doing it that way, David. I'm an actor, you must understand. My father was an actor, very great. My brother is an actor, too, and he is great. But I was the greatest of all. You don't know how I used to be, how I could play—you can't imagine. But I had such trouble with my throat. It would come on me. Florry's remedy helped at first, and brandy helped, but finally nothing helped any more. And in New Orleans I stood there on the stage and opened my mouth and—I couldn't speak a word. You don't know how that felt, it was the most terrible thing that could happen, not when I die will it be worse for me. I blamed my brother, he had put a curse on me, I said. I can't tell you how I felt about my brother, like he was the good side of me and I was the bad side, or he was the bad side and I was the good side, I don't know which, but since I—killed Lincoln, it's not like that. I'm separate and distinct and he's separate and distinct. It's the first time we are separate and distinct people. I don't have to think about him and hate him, because he's not inside of me any more and I'm not inside of him. It's a little as if I had killed my own brother, you see, David, instead of Lincoln, and settled the score between us, though that sounds very odd. It *is* odd. But, you see, the score's settled now, and other scores are, everything is settled. I don't know how to explain it. . . . My leg hurts, and I'm more miserable than you are, David. I can't get up and move around the way you can, and my back aches, it's hard to eat, and no matter how I lie or sit I'm never really comfortable, never for a minute, day or night, but in spite of all that I'm happier than I've been for a long, long time, now that the score is settled. I don't have anything on my mind.

All I've got to do is escape. I don't have to marry Miss Bessie Hale because she has money and is high placed. I don't have to spend months or years taking elocution lessons as though I had never been a famous tragedian, the youngest on the American stage. I don't have to take Ella to England and tire of her there, as I would have tired, though she was like Asia in spite of her blond hair and blue eyes, but was not Asia—as nobody ever was, but Asia herself. I don't have to wonder if my wardrobe arrived in Richmond



and what they will do with it there in the best hotel. I don't have to worry about what I'm going to use for money and what I'm going to use for fame. All I have to do now is escape. Everything else has been lifted off my shoulders. I've just got one problem to solve and that's better than having a hundred. No wonder I feel easier. But you were saying . . . you were asking me before I wandered off the track . . . why I didn't stand backstage and shoot Lincoln from the wings? You were asking me . . . why I risked going up into the box, and shooting him, and making that jump in front of all those people? Haven't you any conception of who those people were, David? Why, they were the *audience*. Can't you imagine, David, what an audience meant to *me*, a great actor? The shot I fired, the line I spoke, it was all for them. Could I hide myself in the wings and not let them know who played the greatest role they ever saw on any stage?

"To tell you the truth," Johnny said soberly, not realizing how long he had been silent, "I never even considered it."

"You could of hit him though, couldn't you, Johnny, from back in the wings?"

"Oh, yes, I guess I could," Johnny said. "But it didn't enter my mind."

That afternoon the sun shone a little and David spread Johnny's blanket down in what sunshine there was. It felt good, except on his injured leg. That felt better in the cool shade and he shifted around so as to stretch it out in shadow.

The previous night Jones had told them there had been a big meeting of the searching squads from up north who converged at Port Tobacco, a party of detectives, one thousand four hundred men of the Eighth Illinois Cavalry, six hundred men of the Twenty-second Colored Troops, and a hundred recruits from the Sixteenth New York Cavalry. Every man had orders to go over the whole territory with a fine-tooth comb.

Johnny had his pistols and knife laid out on his blanket beside him. The crutches Dr. Mudd's gardener had made were close to his hand but he scarcely used them. When he had to move, David was always ready to lend him a hand, help him to his feet and support him carefully. How long the day seemed! He had read the news-



papers until he knew them by heart. Lincoln's funeral was scheduled for today (Wednesday) but not until Friday would he be able to read about it. I wish I had something to do, he thought.

He must ask Thomas Jones to bring them a pack of cards. David would like that. He grieved so over the horses. Two or three times the boy had wandered off in the direction of the thicket where they had been tied, and when he came back his eyes were red. Last night he said in his sleep, "Don't, please, don't, please, don't," and woke and said he thought the overseer had come with a gun to shoot Johnny and him.

He really must remember to ask for a pack of cards, Johnny thought.

Why not write in his diary? He had one in his coat pocket. He turned over on his side to get it out, found a stub of pencil and, supporting himself on his elbow, began to write. "April 14th, Friday, the Ides," he started, then drummed against his teeth with his pencil, thinking what to say next. Of course it wasn't April 14th, that was last Friday. It was Wednesday, April 19th, but he might as well begin it when the thing *began*. The Ides added to it sounded better than just setting down the date, it was like noting some famous day of olden time. He said it over, trying the sound of it—April fourteenth, Friday, the Ides. Now. What should he write? That was very easy. He began, wrote rapidly. Just as he had known what to *say* about his actions, so he knew what to *write*. The role he had effortlessly assumed and unconsciously learned, he was still playing and would play, whether he spoke the words or wrote them. How easy it was to be a patriot who had avenged his country's wrongs by spectacular assassination. How hard it had always been to be himself! This role was so easy. It asked so ridiculously little of him—just to lie here until the time came to cross the river, just to keep from walking around on his broken ankle, just to escape. He did not think or have to think beyond that shadowy time. Carefully, in his best hand, he wrote for the *audience*:

April 14th, Friday, the Ides

Until today nothing was ever thought of sacrificing to our country's wrongs. For six months we have worked to cap-

ture. But our cause being almost lost, something decisive and brave must be done. But its failure was owing to others who did not strike for their country with a heart. I struck boldly, and not as the papers say. I walked with a firm step through a thousand of his friends. . . . A colonel was at his side. I shouted *Sic semper* before I fired. In jumping I broke my leg. I passed all his pickets. Rode sixty miles that night, with the bone of my leg tearing the flesh of every jump.

I can never repent it, though we hated to kill. Our country owed all our troubles to him, and God simply made me the instrument of his punishment.

The country is not what it was. This forced union is not what I have loved. I care not what becomes of me. I have no desire to outlive my country. This night (before the deed) I wrote a long article and left it for one of the editors of the *National Intelligencer*, in which I fully set forth our reasons for our proceedings. He or the Gov't. . . .

He was stopped by the sound of galloping horses. He sat up straight and reached for his gun. David appeared with the carbine, white faced. He always had it in his hands and loitered about with it. Growing restless, he would wander off deep into the woods and scare up small game to shoot at—if only Johnny would let him. He kept track of what he saw as though he had bagged it and used to come and give Johnny the list of his kill—two rabbits, a chipmunk, a squirrel, that damned old owl, a starling.

"Horses, David."

"Them, I guess. . . ."

They didn't make a sound, the two fugitives there in the pine thicket, one on his blanket, one between two trunks of trees—while the horsemen came on, on, down the road not two hundred yards from where they were hidden, and swept past with a wonderful and terrible sound of rattling sabers, their thunder dying away behind them. David moved swiftly to go and peer after them but Johnny motioned for him not to, so he came and sat down instead, still holding the gun, saying "Whew!"

"Maybe tomorrow we'll get across the river," Johnny said, pitching his voice low. "Once we get over into Virginia, we'll be all right."

"They be nicer to us, huh, Johnny?" David said as softly, his color beginning to come back.

"Of course they'll be nicer to us," Johnny promised. "They're real rebels, not like the Marylanders. They'll take us in and we'll have good beds with nice, soft mattresses and clean sheets and soft pillows—and I'll get my leg dressed every day. We'll have good cooked meals, too, and hot coffee, and a hot bath every day—"

"I'll take my bath every other day, or maybe just twice a week," David decided, laying his gun down and curling up on his blanket with his hands beneath his head. "I heard somewheres that water's awful weakening."

Johnny laughed. "And we can shave, and have clean underclothes and clean shirts—and there's usually a young lady or two in a family to sashay around in her best clothes and make herself charming. You know what she'll do? She'll play the piano, or the harp, or the guitar, badly, of course, but that won't matter. When there's moonlight she'll look out the window and give a little scream as though the barn was on fire and say good heavens, have you seen the *moon*? What will you say, David, when she says that to you?"

David scowled. "What does she mean, have we seen the moon? Does she think we're blind?"

"What will you say, though?"

"I'll say, I got eyes."

"That's no way to talk to a nice young lady with golden curls who has done so much for you—sewed on buttons, made blancmange with her own fair hands, showed you her scrapbooks and all her tintypes and read *Hiawatha's Wooing* to you and stuffed you full of bonbons—"

"Me?" David asked, astonished.

"Of course, you. Is that any way to act?"

"What way?"

"Why, when she asks you if you've seen the moon, to say *I got eyes*." Johnny imitated him so exactly that David burst out laughing.

"Well, what'll I say then?"

"You must say," Johnny said, "you must say—Until you show it to me, my dear lady, I have never seen it. But when you do, I shall never see it again without seeing your face."

"All that?" David said, dismayed.

"That isn't much," Johnny said. "That's only the beginning."

Thursday passed uneventfully save for a brief visit from Jones who brought again for the fifth time the discouraging news that they could not yet cross the river. Not only was the district still full of pursuers, but there were more gunboats on the water than had patrolled it during the war. "I've got a rowboat down there waiting for you, though," he said, "hidden under the willows, and the first chance I get I'll see that you get across."

Their benefactor did not inform them of a conversation he had had in a barroom over in Port Tobacco where he had gone the day before to try to find out when the soldiers would be withdrawn. A detective who suspected his thin, expressionless face had sidled up to him. "We know those two bastards are hiding in this neck of the woods," he said. "The man who turns them in can get one hundred thousand dollars in five minutes, cash on the barrelhead. It'll be *paid*, my friend, not promised. Paid."

"That so?" Jones said, turning to him and looking him straight in the eye. "That's a good deal of money to give for one man."

He would have blushed to speak of this, how steadfast he had been, for he was a great gentleman, so he only told them he hoped he would have good news tomorrow.

He did.

The next afternoon he came and said he had been to Allen's Fresh and heard that all the soldiers had been ordered that morning to go down to St. Mary's in the next county, where the fugitives were reported to be. His news meant that after six long days and five long nights in the pines they could go down to the wide river and attempt to cross.

---

# XIX

*"To get the start of the majestic world,  
And bear the palm alone!"*

—UNKNOWN

---

IT took a good while to read the newspapers that Friday morning. The weather was gray and chill, full of mist that would turn to rain before evening. Johnny's clothes felt heavy and damp and his leg pained more than usual. Canning's bullet that had never been removed from his buttock began to make itself felt last night, and today he still felt twinges no matter which way he lay or sat upon his dirty blanket. But he forgot his discomfort, there was so much to read in the day-old paper today! George Alfred Townsend, a homely young reporter Johnny remembered to have been introduced to at a party or reception, wrote up Lincoln's funeral, and signed his long report proudly. It was studded as richly with adjectives as a fruitcake with raisins and Johnny read it with close attention:

At Willard's alone four hundred applications by telegraph for beds were refused. . . . Thousands of people spent Tuesday night in the streets, in depots and in outbuildings. The population of the city this morning was not far short of a hundred thousand, and of these as many as thirty thousand walked in procession with Mr. Lincoln's ashes.

All orders of folks were at hand. The country adjacent sent in haywagons, donkey-carts, dearborns. All who could slip away from the army came to town, and every attainable section of the Union forwarded mourners. At no time in his life had Mr. Lincoln so many to throng about him as in this hour, when he is powerless to do any one a service. For



once in history, office-seekers were disinterested, and contractors and hangers-on human. These came, for this only, to the capital of the republic without an axe to grind or a curiosity to subserve; respect and grief were all their motive. This day was shown that the great public hearts beat unselfish and reverent, even after a dynasty of plunder and war.

The arrangements for the funeral were made by Mr. Harrington, Assistant-Sec'y of the Treasury, who was beset by applicants for tickets. The number of these were reduced to six hundred, the clergy getting sixty and the press twenty. I was among the first to pass the White House guards and enter the building.

Its freestone columns were draped in black, and all the windows were funereal. The ancient reception-room was half closed, and the famous East room, which is approached by a spacious hall, had been reserved for the obsequies. . . . Deeply esconced in the white satin stuffing of his coffin, the President lies like one asleep. The broad, high, beautiful room is like the varnished interior of a vault.

Beneath the roof, the half light shines upon a stage of fresh and fragrant flowers, upbearing a long, high coffin. A cross of lilies stands at the head, an anchor of roses at the foot. The lid is drawn back to show the face and bosom, and on the coffin top are heather, precious flowers, and sprigs of green. This catafalque, or in plain words, this coffin set upon a platform and canopied, has around it a sufficient space of Brussels carpet, and on three sides of this there are raised steps covered with black, on which the honored visitors are to stand.

The fourth side is bare, save of a single row of chairs some twenty in number, on which the reporters are to sit. . . . All is rich, simple, and spacious, and in such sort as any king might wish to lie. Approach and look at the dead man.

Death has fastened into his frozen face all the character and idiosyncrazy of life. He had not changed one line of his grave, grotesque countenance, nor smoothed out a single feature. The hue is rather bloodless and leaden; but he was always sallow. The dark eyebrows seem abruptly

arched; the beard, which will grow no more, is shaved close, save the tuft at the short small chin. The mouth is shut, like that of one who had put the foot down firm, and so are the eyes, which look as calm as slumber. The collar is short and awkward, turned over the stiff elastic cravat, and whatever energy or humor or tender gravity marked the living face is hardened into its pulseless outline. No corpse in the world is better prepared according to appearances. The white satin around it reflects sufficient light upon the face to show us that death is really there; but there are sweet roses and early magnolias, and the balmiest of lillies strewn around, as if the flowers had begun to bloom even upon his coffin. Looking on uninterruptedly! for there is no pressure, and henceforward the place will be thronged with gazers who will take from the sight its suggestiveness and respect. Three years ago, when little Willie Lincoln died, Doctors Brown and Alexander, the embalmers or injectors, prepared his body so handsomely that the President had it twice disinterred to look upon it. The same men, in the same way, have made perpetual those beloved lineaments. There is now no blood in the body; it was drained by the jugular vein and sacredly preserved, and through a cutting on the inside of the thigh the empty blood-vessels were charged with a chemical preparation which soon hardened to the consistence of stone. The long and bony body is now hard and stiff, so that beyond its present position it cannot be moved any more than the arms or legs of a statue. It has undergone many changes. The scalp has been removed, the brain taken out, the chest opened and the blood emptied. All that we see of Abraham Lincoln, so cunningly contemplated in this splendid coffin, is a mere shell, an effigy, a sculpture. He lies in sleep, but it is the sleep of marble. All that made this flesh vital, sentient, and affectionate is gone forever.

The officers present are Generals Hunter and Dyer and two staff captains. . . . The aides walk to and fro, selected without reference to any association with the late President. Their clothes are rich, their swords wear mourning, they go in silence, everything is funereal. In the deeply draped mirrors strange mirages are seen, as in the coffin scene of Lucre-

tia Borgia, where all the dusky perspectives bear vistas of gloomy palls. The upholsterers make timid noises of driving nails and spreading tapestry; but save ourselves and these few watchers and workers, only the dead is here. The White House, so ill-appreciated in common times, is seen to be capacious and elegant—no disgrace to the nation even in the eyes of those foreign folk of rank who shall gather here directly.

. . . the funeral guns are heard indistinctly booming from the far forts, with the tap of drums in the serried street without, where troops and citizens are forming for the grand procession. We see through the window in the beautiful spring day that the grass is brightly green; and all the trees in bloom, show us through their archways the bronze and marble statues breaking the horizon. But there is one at an upper window, seeing all this through her tears, to whom the beautiful noon, with its wealth of zephyrs and sweets, can waft no gratulation. The father of her children, the confidant of her affection and ambition, has passed from life into immortality, and lies below, dumb, cold, murdered. The feeling of sympathy for Mrs. Lincoln is as widespread as the regret for the chief magistrate. Whatever indiscretions she may have committed in the abrupt transition from plainness to power are now forgiven and forgotten. She and her sons are the property of the nation, associated with its truest glories and its worst bereavement. By and by the guests drop in, hat in hand, wearing upon their sleeves waving crepe, and some of them slip up to the coffin to carry away a last impression of the fading face.

But the first accession of force is that of the clergy, sixty in number. They are devout looking men, darkly attired, and have come from all the neighboring cities to represent every denomination. . . . All these retire to the south end of the room, facing the feet of the corpse, and stand there silently to wait for the coming of others. Very soon this East room is filled with the representative intelligence of the entire nation. The governors of states stand on the dais next to the head of the coffin. . . . Behind them are the mayors and councilmen of many towns paying their last respects to the representative of the source of all municipal freedom.

To their left are the corporate officers of Washington, zealous to make this day's funeral honors atone for the shame of the assassination. With these are sprinkled many scarred and worthy soldiers who have borne the burden of the grand war, and stand before this shape they loved in quiet civil reverence.

Still further down the steps and closer to the catafalque rest the familiar faces of many of our greatest generals . . . sitting in a chair upon the beflowered carpet is Ulysses Grant, who has lived a century in the last three weeks and comes today to add the luster of his iron face to this thrilling and saddened picture. He wears white gloves and sash, and is swarthy, nervous, and almost tearful, his feet crossed, his square receding head turning now here now there, his treble constellation blazing upon the left shoulder only, but hidden on the right, and I seem to read upon his compact features the indurate and obstinate will to fight, on the line he had selected, the honor of the country through any peril, as if he had sworn it by the slain man's bier—his state-fellow, patron, and friend. Here also is General McCallum, who has seamed the rebellious South with military roads to send victory along them, and bring back the groaning and scarred. These and the rest are grand historic figures, worthy of all artistic depiction. . . .

What think the foreign ambassadors of such men, in the light of their own over-loaded bodies, where meaningless orders, crosses, and ribbons shine dimly in the funeral light? These legations number, perhaps, a hundred men, of all civilized races. . . .

But nearer down, and most opposite the catafalque . . . stand the central powers of our government, its President and counsellors. President Johnson is facing the middle of the coffin upon the lowest step; and upon his full, plethoric, shaven face, broad and severely compact, two telling gray eyes rest under a thoughtful brow, whose turning hair is straight and smooth. Beside him are Vice-President Hamlin, whom he succeeded, and ex-Governor King, his most intimate friend, who lends to the ruling severity of the place a half Falstaffian episode. The cabinet are behind, as if arranged for a daguerreotypist, Stanton, short and quick-



silvery, in long goatee and glasses, in stunted contrast to the tall and snow-tipped shape of Mr. Welles with the rest, practical and attentive, and at their side is Secretary Chase, high, dignified, and handsome, with folded arms, listening, but undemonstrative, a half-foot higher than any spectator, and dividing with Charles Sumner, who is near by, the preference for manly beauty in age. With Mr. Chase are other justices of the Supreme Court, and to their left, near the feet of the corpse, are the reverend senators, representing the oldest and the newest state. . . . Beyond are the representatives and leading officials of the various departments. . . .

Close by the corpse sit the relatives of the deceased, plain, honest, hardy people, typical as much of the simplicity of our institutions as of Mr. Lincoln's self-made eminence. No blood relatives of Mr. Lincoln were to be found. It is a singular evidence of the poverty of his origin, and therefore of his exceeding good report, that, excepting his immediate family, none answering to his name could be discovered. Mrs. Lincoln's relatives were present, however, in some force. Dr. Lyman Beecher Todd, General John B. S. Todd, C. M. Smith, Esq., and Mr. N. W. Edwards, the late President's brother-in-law, plain, self-made people were here and were sincerely affected. Captain Robert Lincoln sat during the services with his face in his handkerchief weeping quietly, and little Tad, his face red and heated, cried as if his heart would break. Mrs. Lincoln, weak, worn, and nervous, did not enter the East room nor follow the remains. She was the chief magistrate's lady yesterday; today a widow bearing only an immortal name. Among the neighbors of the late President, who came from afar to pay respect to his remains, was one old gentleman who left Richmond on Sunday. I had been upon the boat with him and heard him in hot wrangle with some officers who advised the summary execution of all rebel leaders. This the old man opposed, when the feeling against him became so intense that he was compelled to retire. He counselled mercy, good faith, and forgiveness. Today, the men who had called him a traitor, saw him among the family mourners, bent with grief. All these are waiting in solemn lines,



standing erect, with a space of several feet between them and the coffin, and there is no bustle nor unseemly curiosity, not a whisper, not a footfall—only the collected nation looking with awed hearts upon eminent death.

This scene is historic. . . . In this high, spacious, elegant apartment, laughter and levee, social pleasantry and refined badinage, had often held their session. Dancing and music had made those mirrors thrill which now reflect a pall, and where the most beautiful women of their day had mingled here with men of brilliant favor, now only a very few, brave enough to look upon death, were wearing funeral weeds. . . . And this wonderful relief was carved at one blow by John Wilkes Booth.

The religious services began at noon. They were remarkable not only for their association with the national event, but for a tremendous political energy which they had. While none of the prayers or speeches exhibited great literary carefulness, or will obtain perpetuity on their own merits, they were full of feeling and expressed all the intense concern of the country.

The procession surpassed in sentiment, populousness, and sincere good feeling, anything of the kind we have had in America. It was several miles long, and in all its elements was full and tasteful. The scene on the avenue will be always remembered as the only occasion on which that great thoroughfare was a real adornment to the seat of government. In the tree tops, on the house tops, at all the windows, the silent and affected crowds clustered beneath half-mast banners and waving crape, to reverentially uncover as the dark vehicle, bearing its rich silver-mounted coffin, swept along; mottoes of respect and homage were on many edifices, and singularly some of them were taken from the play of Richard III, which was the murderer's favorite part. The entire width of the avenue was swept, from curb to curb, by the deep lines.

The chief excellence of this procession was its representative nature. All classes, localities and trades were out. As the troops in broad, straight columns, with reversed muskets, moved to solemn marches, all the guns on the fortifications on the surrounding hills discharged hoarse salutes—

guns which the arbiter of war whom they were to honor could hear no longer. Every business place was closed. Sabermen swept the street of footmen and horsemen. The carriages drove two abreast.

Not less than five thousand officers, of every rank, marched abreast of the cortege. They were noble looking men with intelligent faces, and represented the sinews of the land, and the music was not the last excellent feature of the mournful display. About thirty bands were in the line, and these played all varieties of solemn marches, so that there were continual and mingling strains of funeral music for more than three hours. Artillery, consisting of heavy brass pieces, followed behind. In fact, all the citizen virtues and all the military enterprise of the country were evidenced. Never again, until Washington becomes in fact what it is in name, the chief city of America, shall we have a scene like this repeated—the grandest procession ever seen on this continent, spontaneously evoked to celebrate the foulest crime on record. If any feeling of gratulation could arise in so calamitous a time, it would be, that so soon after this appalling calamity the nation calmly and collectedly rallied about its succeeding rulers, and showed in the same moment its regret for the past and its resolution for the future. To me, the scene in the White House, the street, and the Capitol today, was the strongest evidence the war afforded of the stability of our institutions, and the worthiness and magnanimous power of our people.

The cortege passed to the left side of the Capitol, and entering the great gates, passed to the grand stairway, opposite the splendid dome, where the coffin was disengaged and carried up the ascent. It was posted under the bright concave, now streaked with mournful trappings, and left in state, watched by guards of officers with drawn swords. . . . This was a wonderful spectacle. . . . The storied paintings representing eras in its history were draped in sable, through which they seemed to cast reverential glances upon the lamented bier. The thrilling scenes depicted by Trumbull, the commemorative canvases of Leutze, the wilderness vegetation of Powell, glared from their separate pedestals upon the central spot where lay the fallen majesty of the

country. Here the prayers and addresses of the noon were rehearsed and the solemn burial service read. At night the jets of gas concealed in the spring of the dome were lighted up, so that their bright reflection upon the frescoed walls hurled masses of burning light, like marvelous haloes, upon the little box where so much that we love and honor rested on its way to the grave. And so through the starry night, in the fane of the great Union he had strengthened and recovered, the ashes of Abraham Lincoln, jealously guarded are now reposing. The sage, the citizen, the patriot, the man, has reached all the eminence that life can give the worthy or the ambitious. The hunted fugitive who struck through our hearts to slay him, should stand beside his stately bier to see how powerless are bullets and blades to take the real life of any noble man!

When he finished reading, he lit his pipe and stared off into the deep green branches, imagining the scene. He could not believe that he could have built anything so big. Once he looked down at his cold, not overclean hands, at the backs of them, and at his palms, his fingers, too, every line and crease of them. The tattooed initials in India ink: J.W.B. They seemed strange to him, his hands, as though he had never really seen them before.

After Jones had been there and gone again with his good news, that they could cross the river that night, David was so excited and happy he could not sit down a minute.

"It'll be hours yet," Johnny reminded him. "Maybe midnight, for all we know, so you might as well compose yourself."

"Oh, I can't," David said. "I just want to be up and moving. Won't it be grand to go, Johnny, after all this time? It's awful hard just to stay in one place and not have no fire, and nothing to do. I sure got sick of it, didn't you?"

"Yes," Johnny said, "I got pretty sick of it." He was still thinking of the death of Lincoln, bigger than a building. It kept coming back, the size and shape of it, for him to marvel on—and it had not seemed big at all, that moment, a week ago tonight.

"How does your leg feel, Johnny? Hurt you much?"

"About the same as usual," he said. "I guess it's pretty swollen."

His trouser leg fitted it so tightly he could hardly pull it up a little way over the soiled bandage.

"Shouldn't we ought to try to change it?" David said, coming over and looking down at it.

"No," Johnny said. "Tomorrow we'll be over in Virginia at that Dr. Stewart's place, the one Dr. Mudd told us about, remember? I'll get him to dress it for me, put new splints on and everything."

"That'll sure be nice, won't it, Johnny?" David said. "I bet that'll sure feel good to you."

"It will," Johnny said. "I'm looking forward to it."

David scuffed off then, in his restlessness, and set about picking a bunch of flowers, yellow dogtooths, wood violets, false rue. He had quite a bouquet when he returned to his blanket and sat down with it in his hands.

"What's the occasion?" Johnny said, rolling over on his side and looking at the flowers. "Going to put them in the vase in the parlor?"

"No," David said. "I just thought they was kind of pretty and I —didn't have nothing else to do." He sat there, holding them in his hands like a young lady about to have her picture taken.

"I'll tell you what. I'll read you something," Johnny offered, picking up the paper full of George Alfred Townsend's long article on Lincoln's funeral and doubling it back to the last page. "Listen to this." Deliciously mimicking the negro dialect when the time came, he read:

A Raid.—A correspondent at Washington wrote: "Owing to Mosby's depredations, the word 'raid' is worked into almost every expression. I have in my employ a contraband, of double-dyed blackness, called John. I went out to my barn one morning, and, noticing that his face was wet with perspiration, remarked that he 'looked pretty warm.' 'Yes, massa,' was his reply, 'Ise had a pretty big raid on my muscle dis mornin', and Ise mos' done gone!'"

David shouted with laughter, still clutching his flowers, and Johnny had to caution him to be still for fear someone would hear

him. He read another little squib down at the very bottom of the page:

"Joe," said a soldier, looking up from the newspaper he was reading, "where the devil's Status Quo? I see this paper says our army's in Status Quo." "Dunno," replied Joe. "Reckon she must be in the east fork of the Chickamorgy!"

This tickled David nearly as much, although he had no idea where Status Quo was either. "Read some more, Johnny," he begged. "I like when you read them funny stories. I could die laughing."

Johnny folded up the newspaper and tucked it down beside him. "Those are the only two jokes there are today. There're no more in the paper."

"Can't you tell me some, then?"

"I can't think of any right now, David."

"If you do, will you tell 'em to me?" He sat a while longer with his fading flowers and then began to throw them away one by one.

It was pitch dark when they heard a horse's slow, soft walk and a man's still softer footfalls on the road. They ceased, there was silence, and then Jones's old whistle, pause, whistle, came to their ears for the last time. David had gathered together their few possessions before darkness fell, and now, taking them up and going to help Johnny rise for the journey, he accidentally touched his friend's cheek and found it as hot as fire, although Johnny's teeth were chattering.

"Got your crutches?" David asked.

"Yes," Johnny said, giving a little groan as he supported his weight momentarily on his injured leg while he shoved the clumsy crutches beneath his armpits. "Go on, I'll follow you."

"I'd better help you," David said. "It's quite a piece to the road for somebody crippled up. Glory, Johnny," he went on, as they slowly proceeded around bushes, through the narrow openings between tree trunks and over the treacherous branches that brought exclamations of pain from the injured man when they twisted underfoot, "ain't it good to be leaving this thicket?" He glanced back in the direction of the marsh, where its thick, shallow waters



began. "Only I wisht—don't you wisht, Johnny?—that we had them little old horses. I keep thinking how nice it would be if we had them horses and they hadn't of been shot that way, so mean."

"It would have been," Johnny said, wiping the sweat off his forehead, while he shivered and shook in his damp coat. "Only it's no use—crying over spilt milk."

Jones said, when they finally reached him, "We'll put Mr. Booth on my horse, and Herold, you walk beside him. I'll go up ahead about fifty yards. Every little while I'll stop and give a whistle, real low, and then you come forward till you catch up with me. I'll keep going on ahead, and whistling, and you catch up with me, and that way we'd ought to make it to the river with no danger."

"How far is it?" Johnny asked.

"Well, we've got to go down through the pines about a mile and a half, over a path, and then down the public road another mile till we get to the corner of my farm. That's the part I dread most," he said, "that mile of road, because we're sure as hell to meet somebody, and besides, there are two houses to pass along there that won't be no snap. One of them's full of children that are always running around the yard or playing in the road day or night, and the other's got six or eight dogs that bark their fool heads off if the least little thing gets them started. So that stretch I ain't looking forward to and that's the truth."

Though mounting a horse seemed almost an impossibility, it wasn't as bad to sit astride as Johnny had feared. Jones kept far ahead, then would stop, whistle, and they would catch up with him, David walking on tiptoe and holding his breath about half the time. They made it, the mile and a half through the pines, and then entered the public road.

David glanced up into the dark heavens just in time to see a star shoot in an arc and fall. "Johnny!" he whispered. "Look!"

"Shhh," Johnny said, leaning downward to speak as nearly into his ear as possible. "I saw it."

"Does it mean bad luck?"

"Oh, no," Johnny said. "Good luck. It always means good luck."

It must have, for all along the perilous mile they met no one and

they passed the two deadly dangerous houses without a child or a dog arousing.

"Here we are," Jones said. They stopped near his table, a stone's throw from the small house, where one window was orange with lamplight. "I've got you some food wrapped ready to take along," he said softly, coming up to the horse's head. "I'll just go in and get it and you wait here." He started off.

"Wait, Mr. Jones," Johnny whispered after him.

He heard and came back.

Johnny's teeth clicked together. "Please," he said, "please. Couldn't I come in with you? Couldn't we? Just to sit for a minute by the fire?"

David said nothing, but his sigh added a plea to Johnny's.

"If we could just go in? And—warm our hands?" (And see how the keeping room of a house looks lit by lamplight once more, see a cupboard, a chair, a table, see how a log burning on an open hearth looks, see a picture on a wall, a calendar, hold a china cup by its small handle, hear a clock tick? Once more, once more?) "Maybe we could—have a cup of coffee?" He gave a little laugh to cover his shame. "I—we'd like it, sir. You can't imagine."

Jones's Adam's apple went up and down. "You got to get going, Mr. Booth. There might not be no chance again."

"Just for a little while. Not for long, honestly. We won't impose—" (I beg of you. I beg of you.)

"No, Mr. Booth," Jones said, swallowing again. "You just stay here and I'll go in, and I'll be right out, and lead you down to the river." When he turned away and started for the warm light of home, it blurred a little before his eyes.

This time they went over a soft and rutty open field for some distance, Jones walking on one side of the horse, David on the other. He stopped them finally and said, "Now, Mr. Booth, we'll help you down. It's about three hundred more yards and you'll have to walk it."

They could hear the lapping water in the darkness ahead, went toward it. It was slow work, for the crutches were useless in the boggy ground and David carried them while Johnny hung his left

arm around the boy's neck and leaned heavily against him. Every downward step was an agony. When they reached the river only its sound made a presence of it, fabulizing its width and depth, spangling it, though it was as black as the night.

Jones gave them hasty directions. "Cross right here from Pope's Creek, don't go down nor up but strike straight across which is five miles. You'll land so's you can go up Machodoc Creek. Mr. Booth, you steer, and Herold, you row." He lit a stub of candle and they bent their heads over Johnny's compass, studying it, while Jones cupped the telltale flame with his palm. He glanced at Johnny and felt remorse when he saw how sick he looked. "I can't go with you," he said. "I'm afraid the Negroes on the place would get suspicious and maybe blab to someone. But you won't have no trouble. You got it all straight?" He blew the candle out and handed it to Johnny, who stuck it with the compass in his coat pocket. "Right straight across to Machodoc Creek. Go up it a little ways and you'll see Mrs. Quesenberry's house. It'll be off to your right about fifty yards from the creek. Pretty little place, you can't miss it, in among some poplars, got a porch in front and a red chimney, set on a nice green lawn. You say to her I sent you—she knows me. And have her get you in touch with my brother-in-law, name's Thomas Harbin. I can't promise he'll do nothing, he don't take much interest in folk's troubles, but you can try him. You got all that?"

"Five miles straight across," Johnny repeated. "Machodoc Creek. Mrs. Quesenberry's. Poplars. Red chimney. Have her get us in touch with Mr. Thomas Harbin."

The boat was twelve feet long and shallow. It had a flat bottom and didn't rock much when Johnny clambered heavily into it and took his place. David came after him and managed not to stumble over his injured leg. He sat down with a grunt and reached for the oars. Jones started to push the boat off when Johnny said, "Wait a minute, just a minute, wait. I want to give you this." He groped backward in the darkness for Jones's elbow, felt for his hand, found it, pressed some bills into it.

"Here," Jones said, "here, now. I don't want no money."

"There isn't money enough in the world to pay you for what you've done for me, while every man's hand is turned against me,"

Johnny said in a husky voice. "But I won't take your boat without pay. You may not get it back again."

"I don't want no money, Mr. Booth."

"Take it, my good friend, or we must remain here."

Reluctantly Jones closed his fingers around it, put it slowly into his back pocket. "I wish you a safe journey," he said, with odd, genteel formality, "all the way, every step of the way. I wish you may fare well." His hand met Johnny's in the dark and gripped it. "Poor lad," his lips said. "Poor lad. . . ." He shoved the boat hard and it glided outward. There came the sound of oars rising and falling and Johnny's last words to him in a stage whisper, "Good-by, my kind, kind friend."

---

# XX

*" . . . Whereby I shall go see Thy ship ride on the strand  
And think and say Lo where he comes and  
Sure here he will land. . . ."*

—TOTTTEL'S MISCELLANY

---

IF THEY had been experienced navigators they must have reached the other side eventually, though the river was at treacherous flood tide. But added to the fact that they were not and that a gunboat seeming little smaller than the Capitol loomed out of the dark to send them wildly fleeing, whether to east or west, they got hopelessly off their course. When it grew light enough they saw with a feeling of panic that in spite of all David's rowing, all Johnny's steering, they were still on the Maryland side of the river.

"But we must have come miles!" Johnny said in horror.

They had. They had come twelve miles out of their way and were no closer to—indeed, much farther from—their goal than when they had started. They were drifting now, and weary David craned his neck to see where they might be. "Say," he said, "we're up around the Nanjemoy Stores. I recognize this place. Pa brought me hunting here many a time. Ducks. We used to get mallards and bluebills and all kinds. We hunted around here every so often."

Johnny, sick and exhausted, huddled in his shawl, kept silent.

"I know a man around here, too. I'll steer for right in that creek there," David said, doing it, "and land, and go and try to find him. He's got a round tower to his house and his boy got killed at Antietam or one of them battles. He knew my pa and he knew me, too. The times we'd come here, my pa would say, 'We'll pay a call on Colonel Hughes and drink some of his buttermilk.' He had fine buttermilk. Pa'd drink a couple quarts. Yes, sir, that's what



I'll do," David said. "I'll land right along here and go and try to find Colonel Hughes. *He'll* take us in, you can bet!"

He hid the boat under some willows.

"If you find him," Johnny said tiredly, "don't even ask him if we can stay. I want to get out of Maryland. We've got to get over into Virginia. We've got to. If you find him, just ask him how and when we can cross the river, ask him what time's right, and ask him if he can let us have some brandy." When David stepped ashore and started out, he lay full length in the boat, so numb with cold that even his pain was numbed, and then he dropped into a fitful slumber that lasted a long while.

When he opened his eyes he didn't know where he was at first—among willows and in a boat upon water instead of on the ground under the pines. . . . It took a moment to remember and when he did he sat up in a panic, his heart pounding. He reached for his watch with shaking fingers and stared at it in disbelief. Nine o'clock, five minutes to nine and David had been gone over three hours! They might have caught him! He might have run away! "Oh, God," Johnny said through stiff lips, "please send David back, I'm all alone, I can't make it by myself. I can't, dear God. Please, please, send him back." He was crying, and he found his handkerchief and wiped his eyes thinking I must be sick—I must be losing my mind—crying. I've got to stop it. I can't sit here in this goddamned boat crying like a two-year-old. He stopped, made himself stop, the better to confront the problem that faced him if David never returned. He grew hotter and hotter, so hot that he leaned over and hung his hands in the chill water. His lips blistering with the strange heat, he began to cool them with his wet fingers, shut his blistering eyes, praying, "God, God, send David back."

David came back. He lifted up the willows like the curtain of a tent and stepped into the boat.

He had ham and bread with him, but no brandy. "Colonel Hughes never had none," he explained. "But he give me this jar of milk."

Johnny shuddered, and his fever abated little by little until he was cold again.

"It ain't buttermilk, though. It's sweet milk."

"Did he tell you how to get across? And when?" Johnny took the bread and ham David offered him but he bit off little chunks with distaste and found he could hardly chew and swallow it.

"He says we can get across easy—the river's only three miles wide here—and then we can drift right down on the other side of Machodoc Creek. But we got to stay where we are till dark tonight because the tide won't be right till then." He talked with his mouth full, and reached for the jar of milk.

"All day, till dark," Johnny said drearily.

"We're safe as houses," David said. "Nobody would think of looking for us here where we are. So I'm going to take me a nice little snooze. I can't hardly keep my eyes open. Say, you know Colonel Hughes's place was lots farther off than I recollected? I liked to walk my legs off before I seen that round tower. Say, Johnny."

"What?" Johnny said, pressing his fingers to his throbbing temples.

"You know how you said not to ask him if we could stay because we want to get on over into Virginia? Well, I can tell you one thing. It wouldn't of done no good. Glory, Johnny, you should of seen the look on his face when he seen it was me knocking on his door. You should of seen how he snuck me in and snuck me out. 'Why, boy,' he says to me, 'I'd sooner see the very Old Nick than see you right this minute.' 'That so?' I says. 'Why, the whole blame Union Army is after you and that actor,' he says. 'They been running over my place like grasshoppers. They go on but there's always new ones coming. I wouldn't dare keep you five minutes. And them damn detectives,' he says, 'pussyfooting around. Why, they'd nab you before you could count to ten. And what do you think's to happen to the folks who lift a finger for you?' he says. 'What?' I says. 'Execution,' he says. 'They'll be hung as traitors to the country.' 'I wouldn't want to see you hung,' I says, 'Colonel Hughes.' 'No, and I wouldn't want to see myself hung either,' he says. 'Well, then,' I says, 'if you'll just tell us when's the best time to cross the river, and give us a little something to eat, and some brandy—' I says. But he didn't have no brandy. I bet he's still shaking in his shoes," he added, wiping the crumbs off his lips but leaving the cheerful smile intact. "I never seen a man so scared."

Johnny reclined, bunching the blanket under his head for a pillow, but that was not comfortable so he soon sat up, moving his injured leg a few inches to the side with his two hands, and lit his pipe. "You know, David," he said, "I got to thinking maybe you weren't coming back."

"Not coming back!" David said, opening his eyes wide. "Where would I go, for glory's sake?"

"I thought you'd just do the sensible thing and go on by yourself, without dragging along a man with a broken leg. And I was trying to figure out what I'd do—without you." He could smile about it now, as one can smile about a nightmare.

"Why, I wouldn't do no such thing as that," David said reproachfully. "And anyway, my face is plastered all over the country just the same as yours is. They'd nab me just as quick without you, as with you. And besides," he went on, groping for the right words, "you're my friend. You—been nice to me, give me a gun and free passes and I don't know what all. Why, glory, Johnny, you're a famous actor! I'm—*proud* you took to me."

"I'm proud you took to me," Johnny said gently. He looked at his companion curiously as though he were seeing for the first time the clear friendly eyes, straight brows and childish mouth that never wanted to do anything but smile and chatter. David was thinner than he had been and the cheeks under the transparent fuzz of his first beard had lost their peach red.

He flushed under Johnny's scrutiny and put a boyish hand up to his cowlick, smoothing it down. "And besides," he said, "wasn't you going to make an actor out of me? Wasn't you going to learn me to act on the stage?"

"Of course," Johnny said. "I haven't forgotten."

"Me, neither," David said. "I want to act more the funny parts, like, and make people laugh. But the only trouble with me, I'm liable to bust out laughing myself. That's what worries me. How does an actor keep from busting out laughing himself at all that funny stuff?" He laughed, speculating on this dilemma of the future.

"Oh, that doesn't need to worry you," Johnny said seriously. "You'll learn. It's like learning anything else."

While David napped in the bottom of the boat through the long

noontide and half the afternoon, Johnny in the green willow-light got his diary out and wrote in it again with a patriotic hand the patriotic words of his letter-perfect role.

The role, however, was growing harder to play. Almost as hard, if one faced it squarely and took everything into consideration, as it might have been to go ahead and play himself, a handsome young actor full of unnatural love and hatred, with a soul in torment and a lost voice. If it got much harder he might have to give up the part altogether. But no, he could not do that, could he? He had to keep on with it, because, terrifyingly, assassin and self were now one and indissoluble. He brought his right hand up close to his face and looked at it. That reverberating death of Lincoln, that enormity, that amplest structure in America—he could not unbuild it now. With this hand, it was built forever and nobody could push it down. He hid his hand in the water over the boat's side, but not to cool it for it was cold as death.

He went on thinking. He had . . . put on a costume, tried it on. It became him wondrously, fitted like a glove, and he strutted about in it so everyone could see. But now, of terrible oak and alder and blackthorn, it had grown fast to him, was sealed, above, below, all around. The buried corpse opens its dim eyes and sees the casket so, scratches fearfully with its growing fingernails those sides and top, squeaks like a chill, shrill mouse, chitters, claws, dimly and twitteringly wails. . . . There was no way to get it off, get out of it, go free. Coffin and corpse were one. Slayer and he were one, there was no going back to being himself, because this *was* himself. He breathed fast but there wasn't enough air. He looked around wildly, his nostrils distended, his mouth half open, breathing frantically, trying to get what air there was. He sweat and shook, burned and shivered. "Help me, help me," he said, but David slept and the plumes of willow waved in the unfledged wind.

When David woke up, the first thing he asked was, "What time is it, for glory's sake?"

"Almost three," Johnny said, wondering if he looked so changed that David would notice.

"Oh," the boy said in disappointment. He looked at Johnny, who

anxiously watched and felt relieved when his eyes were not startled. "I was hoping it would be five or six. Don't it seem like we got to wait a long time till night and we can get going?"

It seemed two or three times as long as it actually was, but somehow, by talking and being silent, dozing, restlessly changing positions and talking again, they managed to while away the hours until darkness.

"I was thinking that old thicket back there on Colonel Cox's place—" David said, "I was thinking that old thicket was about the worst spot where anybody could have to stay, but now I kind of wisht we was back there again, with me moseying around, and you reading the newspapers and old Jones coming by. I bet it looks funny there without us, the place where you slept and I slept, where we wore the ground down smooth. I bet it looks lonesome, and sounds lonesome, with us not there talking no more. I bet that old owl wonders where we went to. You know something, Johnny?"

"No, what?"

"I'm going to buy me a horse someday. You know what kind?"

"What kind?"

"Just like that little old bay! She was awful nice, wasn't she, with that white star on her forehead and the way she'd act so kind of forward and flip. Wasn't she? You know something?" he said.

"What?"

"I just wanted to bust that overseer in the nose. I could of bawled—but of course I didn't."

David liked to hear how it was going to be over in Virginia when they got there, and pressed Johnny to tell him the whole story again. Johnny did, though talking pained and tired him and it was hard to keep his mind on what he was saying, but somehow it all seemed quite likely, quite true, and the recital comforted him almost as much as it reassured his young companion.

That night they had good luck and, the tide being right, crossed the river. They drifted down the Virginia shore, hunting Machodoc Creek. They kept their eyes open and went like a snail, but just when dawn was beginning to break they left the river and paddled up the wrong creek. There was no house, of course, with a red chimney, fifty yards from the water to their right. They looked and



looked for those poplars, that front porch, that patch of lawn. It was nowhere to be seen.

"We've got off the track," Johnny said. "We've gone wrong somehow. There's no such house as Jones described and I know we've come far enough up to have seen it if there were."

"What'll we do?" David asked worriedly. "Go down her and out in the river again, and try to find Machodoc Creek? It's probably the next one we come to."

"No," Johnny said. "It's too late for that. It's broad daylight. There'll be too many boats on the river. We'd be spotted sure. No, I'll tell you what, David. Land in there under that big tree to the left, and then maybe you'd better start walking off in that direction. Mrs. Quesenberry *must* live around here somewhere. Maybe you can ask somebody."

But David was reluctant to do as Johnny said. His conversation with Colonel Hughes had sobered and made him timid. "It's too early," he said. He pulled the boat up onto the sloping bank and helped Johnny out. "Let's just sit here for a while."

Finally he was persuaded to go off and hunt for Mrs. Quesenberry's house. Johnny drowsed off under the big walnut tree while he was gone. He was never without pain but he had grown used to it now after nine days and ten nights, as the exhausted mother of the chronically crying child begins hardly to hear it. He was asleep when David came back with a woebegone face, but he woke instantly, though the boy made no sound. "What's the matter?" he said, sitting up. "Couldn't you find the house? Wasn't the lady home?"

David sat down heavily, thrusting his hands between his knees. "She was home all right," he said. "The house is right off that way a couple of miles." He pointed. "And I told her Mr. Thomas Jones sent us and everything. But she said she wouldn't any more take us in than fly to the moon. She says they'd every last one of them get hung if she did, her, and her old man and all her kids. She says it'd be as much as their lives was worth."

Johnny's lips tightened.

"I told her you was hurt bad and everything, and how we didn't

have nothing to eat and no place to sleep and didn't know what we was going to do next—"

"You shouldn't have told her that."

"—but nothing made no difference. 'I was loyal to the cause,' she says, 'nobody can say I wasn't loyal to the cause, but I ain't risking my neck and my loved ones' necks. You've got to get off my place,' she says, 'and you've got to get that actor off my place.' 'He ain't on your place,' I says. 'Well, see that he ain't,' she says. She's one of them heavy-set ladies that their necks gets red and starts to beat so you can see it like she swallowed a bird." He thought this over disconsolately. "And here we are over in Virginia and people ain't no nicer than they was before!"

"So then what happened?" Johnny said. He did not seem to care very much. Suddenly he felt too indolent to move an inch, to rub the eyelid that itched, to light his pipe.

"Why, nothing, only finally I guess she felt sorry," David went on, "because she says, 'You're only a boy, ain't you?' And then she promised to send us something to eat. I told her about old Jones's kin and she says he lives right near by. She's going to send one of her girls for him. Then she'll have him bring the stuff to eat she's fixing, down here to the creek. Gambo Creek, this is, where we are, she says. If she can get him to do it. I bet nobody'll come. And what are we going to do?" He picked up a little stick and began poking into the ground with it. "What will we do next, Johnny?"

"I'll—figure something out," Johnny said, closing his eyes to the sunlight beyond the circle of shade where he rested, too weary to move off the pebble between his shoulder blades. But when he tried to think, he kept thinking of the wrong things, of Juanita the squirrel at Nellie's house, turning that awful wheel round and round day in and day out without stopping, and Asia waiting. And there was something he ought to do, if he could only remember what it was, some important business like mailing a letter or going to a rehearsal—could he recall the words when the time came?—"Thus high, by thy advice, and the assistance, is King Richard seated: But shall we wear these glories for a day? Or shall they last, and we rejoice in them?" And somebody wanted him to jump

off a little platform twenty feet above the stage, but his leg was broken and he couldn't do it, even if the President was coming to the performance. But of course that was a lie . . . the overseer shot him and David cried. And Ella must be told not to wait any longer in red and yellow skirts because the wheel kept going round and it was hard for him to remember all the words of his part—"No, Cassius, no? think not, thou noble Roman, that ever Brutus will go bound to Rome; he bears too great a mind. But this same day. . . . Must end that work the ides of March begun . . . and whether we shall meet again I know not. Therefore our everlasting farewell take. . . . Forever, and forever, farewell, Cassius! If we do meet again, why, we shall smile. . . . If not, why, then this parting was well made."

"Johnny," David said.

He opened his eyes but he did not turn his head.

"Johnny, here's that Mr. Harbin that's the brother-in-law of Mr. Jones."

He sat up then, painfully, and ran his hand over his dry lips. "How do you do, sir," he said, trying to smile. It was so odd to dream and be awake at the same time, most uncomfortably odd. He must try not to do it.

Mr. Thomas Harbin had a face as friendly as a rusty pump over a dry well. "You're barking up the wrong tree," he said. "Mrs. Quesenberry sent you this satchel of stuff to eat but she can't take you in and neither can I. None of us can, hereabouts." He handed the pasteboard case to crestfallen David, who took it and said thank you. "You'd best be on your way. That's all the advice I can give you."

Johnny looked down at his leg. The dirty bandage on his swollen ankle had stiffened with foul oozings until it was as hard as the splints beneath it. "There's no better advice, I am sure of that, my friend," he said sardonically, "but I have suffered a slight accident and I can't walk. Also I have no horse, no wagon, no conveyance of any sort. How would you propose that I carry out this apt recommendation?"

Harbin looked at him without expression. "That's no affair of

mine," he said. "But just for curiosity's sake, where was you aiming at?"

"Why, we're going—" David began eagerly.

"We are *aiming at* reaching the house of a man named Dr. Stewart who is supposed to live somewhere in this locality," Johnny said, his eyes not participating in the set smile upon his lips. "Do you know where that would be?"

"Well, there's a Dr. Stewart about eight miles east of here," Harbin said unwillingly, "but he might not be the one. He's likely not."

"He likely is," Johnny said. "Would you drive us there for twenty dollars?"

"Got no horse," Harbin said.

David backed up to the tree and began rubbing his shoulders against it, his worried eyes first on Johnny's face then on their visitor's.

"Do you know anyone who could or would take us there?"

The man considered. "Nobody but old Bryant," he said finally. "He lives off that way," pointing to the east, "in among that stand of forest. He'd do it for money."

"Would you be so good as to accompany us to his house?"

"Listen," Harbin said, ignoring Johnny's question, "all the advice I got for you fellows is, you better get moving and not drag innocent people into your troubles. Why, that damned Union government's fixing to hang two, three hundred people before they get through. I got to be getting back before some damned free nigger comes by and sees us talking and goes and blabs and hangs the innocent with the guilty."

"I will pay you five dollars to take us to Bryant's house," Johnny said. He took the bill out and held it up.

The man's eyes wavered, and then he reached over and took it. "Well," he said, "you fellows get back in your boat there and paddle on up the creek till you get to the little bridge. I'll mosey along on the bank and meet you there. You'll have to leave the boat then and walk a piece, but it ain't so far through the woods. You can make it."

Mr. Bryant had a face still more unpromising than his neighbor's, who left the two fugitives and fled as soon as cursory introductions

had been made. But the twenty dollars spoke his language and he consented to take them to Dr. Stewart's in the late afternoon. "I can't leave before then," he said. "I got chores to do." It was within the realm of possibility that he would shut the door of his small cabin in their faces and leave them standing outside to wait during the intervening three hours.

Johnny stood as straight as he could on his one leg with the crutches under his arms. "May we come in?" he asked courteously.

Surprised, Bryant opened the door a little wider. "I guess so," he mumbled. "Come on in."

David behind him, rubbing his hands on his trousers as though this motion would make him presentable enough for polite society, Johnny hobbled up the steps and past their unsmiling host, his heart beating fast, and entered, as a man who is blind enters the world of light again—a room. A small and poorly furnished room it was, but very clean. The woman who kept it so was hovering by the stove. A Negress of light color, she came forward timidly. "Welcome, sir," she said, as though she had been the lady of the house. "Come and have a chair. It's warm outside but cold inside so we's got us a fire."

David looked at Bryant out of the corner of his eyes, but Johnny made a little bow to her. "Thank you," he said, "we shall be pleased to do so." He smiled, and some of the old beauty came back, the charm that had made so many do his bidding.

She smiled in return, a comely woman of a delicate tint like molasses candy, her eyes matching her skin. She wore a clean blue cotton gown tied with a spotted sash and she had bare feet. Her hair was long and unbound, very dark, but not overly curly.

When she retired to another room, as she did soon, the place where they sat seemed very quiet and empty. The two guests tried to make conversation with their taciturn host but failed, even David failed, and Johnny let his eyes rove about the room. Everything in it seemed oddly unreal to him and not for actual use, like the exhibits in a museum, the table, chairs, red japanned chest, even the woodbox stacked with crooked lengths of apple boughs. It began to be much too hot by the stove, and Johnny, sick at his stomach, wanted to move away, but it was hard to find the energy and he could not



imagine where else he should sit. He had again that grisly remembrance of Juanita in her cage and strove desperately to put it out of his mind, because the more the wheel went around the sicker he got. He licked his lips and put his hand up to his forehead, finding it wet with perspiration. "Could I trouble you for a drink of water?" he said, closing his eyes and holding on tight to the sides of the chair to keep from being swept off into dizzy blackness. He hung on by some miracle for days, weeks, until a cold, wet glass tickled against his teeth and he was drinking thirstily. He could dare to open his eyes then, but not let loose his grip on the chair, and he saw the housekeeper bending over him. The deliciously cool thing on his forehead was her hand, but she took it away almost at once. "You's a sick man," she said in a high, sweet voice. "Best you gets to bed for a while."

"He can't lay in this house and be sick," Harbin said. "I'm getting him over to Dr. Stewart's place soon's the chores are done."

"He can lay here till he goes," she said. David was surprised that Harbin didn't say a word back to her but just sat there fingering his chin while the housekeeper, not even glancing his way, placed Johnny's arm around her neck and helped him to rise. David came and helped then, too, and together they got Johnny to a little alcove and put him down upon a neatly made bed. Johnny was glad to be there, away from the hot stove, he had been so warm, but now he shivered and was grateful when the housekeeper came with a brightly blocked quilt to throw over him. He saw the pattern through his half-closed eyes. "Job's-tears?" he whispered.

"Johnny, you're not out of your head, are you?" David begged fearfully, squatting down beside the bed.

"Of course I'm not," he said.

"No, young man," she said, "this ain't Job's-tears. It's just common ol' Wedding Ring. You know somebody blockin' Job's-tears?"

He shook his head.

There was never anything so good as that bed and that goose-down pillow with the clean calico case. As Johnny sank into slumber it seemed that if he could just be here all his life, he would never ask anything better, and all he had desired before seemd as idle and foolish as the worthless old blunderbuss on the wall of his room at

home. If Miss Charlotte Cushman, the clumsy actress, and a trunk of theatrical costumes, had not sat so heavily upon his left leg, which, while it did not pain him, was yet made extraordinarily uncomfortable by this state of affairs, he might have rested very well. He could wander away and leave the leg with its odd burden but he could never forget it. He went to Mrs. Surratt's house on two perfectly good legs and rapped at her door, but she was not at home. All the streets were deserted. All the houses were entirely empty. He said, "Fear not, Macbeth; no man that's born of woman . . . shall e'er have power upon thee. Then fly, false thanes, and mingle with the English epicures. . . . The mind I sway by, and the heart I bear . . . shall never sag with doubt, nor shake with fear," loudly all the way down the middle of the road but nobody stuck his head out of any of the windows. With Asia lightweight as a ghost upon his arm, he was going to a funeral. The dead man without blood or heart or brain was so wonderfully, mystically and magically embalmed that he had changed to genuine Italian marble and would outlast the Giza Pyramids. "I understand it's quite a sight," he explained, and Mother said—Asia said—"It should be educational, should be educational, should be educational," whispering it like the wind. He could have gone anywhere he wanted without that behemoth and that trunk upon his leg, that deadly weight, but eventually it always pulled him back to the bed in the alcove where a mulatto woman was painted like clouds upon a high ceiling that rippled above him. He might have slept as peacefully as a babe. He *did* sleep peacefully. He watched himself sleeping with his hand under his cheek and at the same time saw David out in a boat rowing away as hard as he could until he was only a speck far, far in the distance on the black waves, saw Ella in a bright cage spinning and turning a hideous wheel. . . .

"Young man, young man."

He woke with a start. There was nothing on his leg, only the splints and the stiff and grimy bandage. He wanted to rise to a sitting position but it was very hard to do so; he merely thought about it, gave it up and lay as he was, shifting his eyes to the side to see who had spoken.

It was the housekeeper standing there, smiling. She had a plate in

her hands with something for him to eat, and out of courtesy he struggled upward. She helped him and he half sat. "I've done made you a omelet," she said, putting the strangely heavy plate into his hands.

He looked at it. "That was very kind," he said. It was feathery, light and golden, sugared and cinnamoned. The sweat broke out on his forehead. "I can't—eat it," he said, raising shamed eyes to her face. "My stomach is somewhat upset."

"Couldn't you just take a little taste? It's most time for you to go. They're out hitching up. You needs it for the stren'th."

"A thousand, ten thousand, pardons," he said wretchedly. "But I—couldn't swallow a mouthful."

"You's 'fraid it would come right back up?"

He nodded, his cheeks flushing.

When she saw that he had to avert his eyes from it and nausea was causing him to press his cracked lips tightly together, she reached for the plate and sadly carried it out.

Johnny swung his feet to the floor and at that moment David came in to help. "You was sure sawing away," he said. "I wandered around outside and mostly sat on the steps by myself. That old Bryant ain't no one to stay around if you got nowheres else to go. I never seen nobody closer mouthed. Mean son of a gun," he went on, lowering his voice, while Johnny stood swaying a moment before he felt well enough to take a step forward on his crutches, "but that nigger woman's sure got him under her thumb. She says something, it goes. Ain't that funny?"

He tried to think what to give her for her kindness, not money, any more than he would leave money for a gracious hostess in a refined circle, but some little memento. Johnny felt in all his pockets but had nothing that would do except an unused linen handkerchief, still folded, with his initials ornately worked. He folded it into a still smaller square and slipped it under the pillow.

He looked for her in the keeping room and stuck his head in the adjoining room, but she was not there. Neither was she anywhere outside. When they drove off in the late afternoon sunshine he was sorry that he had not seen her to tell her thank you and to say good-by.

"Now, I'm not such a fool as to be taking you by the regular road," Bryant said, holding the reins tight and high in the manner of a tandem driver, "so don't expect to be riding over velvet. We got to go through the woods and byways, and we'll get a jouncing, but that's better'n being took up and hung."

It was not long before Johnny, white faced and agonized, began to doubt it. But then, he had never been hung.

---

# XXI

*"I have abandoned Troy, left my possession,  
Incurr'd a traitor's name; exposed myself,  
From certain and possess'd conveniences,  
To doubtful fortunes. . . .  
And here, to do you the service, am become  
As new into the world, strange unacquainted:  
I do beseech you, as in way of taste  
To give me now a little benefit. . . ."*

Troilus and Cressida: SHAKESPEARE

---

THE SUN was setting when the jolting stopped, and Bryant had David get out of the wagon to open the sagging gate that led into Dr. Stewart's estate. It was fenced and forested and when they started up the half-mile, tree-lined road to the house hidden among cedars and maples it was like going through a park. The grass, bitterly green in the pink and lilac light, was clipped and smooth and there were acres of it.

"What do you think the doc's worth?" Bryant demanded suddenly, startling even miserable Johnny, for he had hardly spoken during their grueling trip.

David sat up straighter, pleased at the prospect of conversation. He considered. "Well, he's sure got a lot of nice land here, and he's got a great big house, what I can see of it. So I imagine—" he began.

"This ain't only his summer place," Bryant said, giving him a contemptuous look. "This ain't only a drop in the bucket to what he owns elsewhere. He's worth—why, that man's worth, if he's worth a cent—" He paused to clear his throat and spit over the rolling wheel. "Why, do you know who come here and stayed every little while during the war? Stayed right here in that house?"

"No, who?" David asked with great interest.



It had been a punishing ride. But we will be there soon, it's only a little way now, just a few steps really—why, I could almost reach out and touch the house, Johnny thought. And he's a doctor, he'll give me something to take, he'll fix my leg. I'll explain to him how sick I've been and ache all over and can't eat, although my leg doesn't pain the way it did, it just feels so heavy and queer. I'll tell him all that. He'll know what to do.

Johnny could see himself carried into a large, cool room. They took his clothes off . . . the first time he had his clothes off in how many days? as sorely wounded knights were carried and tended in olden time. They . . . sponged his hot skin and slipped him between cool sheets in a great canopied bed. They went around pulling down the shades and the light turned to greenish dark while they said you have gone through enough, you have been brave enough, now sleep and rest.

I'll count, he decided, gritting his teeth and trying not to mind the going. It will only be a little while now, a few minutes. One, two, three, four . . . when he got to nine he remembered that he must comb his hair, smooth his mustache—no, he had no mustache—make himself presentable. He tried to brush off his coat, in sudden panic that he had waited too long, got out his little tortoise-shell comb and with shaking fingers, the effort making the sweat run down his ribs from his armpits, began to comb his hair. It felt stiff and dry, and it came out in the comb, quite a lot of it. It perplexed him to find the teeth of the comb wound with hair, and, as though it might be somebody else's of another color than his own, he threw away the combings with disdainful fingers and a revolted stomach.

"Why, *General Lee's daughters*, that's who!" Bryant said triumphantly. "Time after time, they come right here and stayed in this very house with Dr. Stewart's folks while their daddy was off fighting the war. No, sir," he said, "the Stewarts ain't nobody to bust *in* on. They know who they mix with." He gave David that contemptuous look again. "They know, all right. Anybody else is out on their sit-downs!"

It looked the handsomest house in the world as Bryant jerked on the reins and the horse halted, the wicked wheels made their last racking turn and the wagon stopped before the flower-bordered

walk that led to the wide front porch and the polished door three times the size of an ordinary one. There were some young ladies walking arm in arm in the side garden. Their dresses looked wonderfully imponderable, though stiff standing and precious in the red and purple evening, upon the green grass. Johnny saw the scene as on a tapestry hung up in some dim place far off, while David helped him down and worked his crutches under his arms, saying, "This is sure nice, ain't it, Johnny?" He nodded, wondering why his heart should begin pounding so fast and his breath should come so short. Bryant had climbed down, too, and was rounding the wagon when the large front door opened and a man came out and started toward them.

He was tall and massive, with graying blond hair and mustache and imperial to match. He had a nose like Washington's, light, sharp eyes and a carnation complexion. He was wearing fine gray serge, and an old-fashioned ruffled shirt under a plush waistcoat. He walked like a soldier, which he was not, for he had served the Confederacy in other ways. Twice he had been arrested and imprisoned for harboring gentlemen spies, once in Washington and once on a prison ship, which he found so disagreeable that he never wanted to repeat the experience. He came straight up to his newly arrived visitors.

"I don't want to know your names," he said, "and I don't want to know your business. My house is full and I have no room for uninvited guests."

The ground lurched under Johnny's feet. He opened his mouth to speak but the words he wanted wouldn't come. He felt David's hand on his arm, steadying him, felt Bryant's insolent, sidelong look.

"He's hurt," David said. "He needs to get his leg fixed. It's broke and he's got to get a new bandage put on."

"I am not a surgeon," Dr. Stewart said. "I do not carry on a practice. Who took it upon himself to send you to me?"

"Dr. Mudd, over in Bryantown," David said desperately. "He told us you would put some new bandages on Johnny's leg. Didn't he, Johnny?"

Johnny did not answer, could not.

"I don't know the man," Dr. Stewart said. "I am not a surgeon.

I cannot help you in any way. And I am entirely unable to offer you hospitality." He turned from them abruptly and started up the walk.

"Doctor," Johnny said in a clear, ringing voice.

Something in it had the authority to stop the red-faced man and bring him back, though only a few steps. "There is no need to discuss it further," he said. "You will be so good as to leave the premises."

With his old aplomb, summoned by terrible will, Johnny said, "You do not wish to know our names, because you know our names. You do not wish to know our business, because you know our business was to serve our country by striking off the chains of tyranny which held her fast. So be it, honored sir. It is not for such as myself to basely grovel before such as you. I bid you good evening. Come, David," he said.

"My money," Bryant, behind them, reminded him in a loud whisper.

"But where shall we go, Johnny? We got no place to go!" David besought him, and when he did not answer, hastened to the doctor who had started up the path again. "Please, Doctor," he begged, "please let us sleep in your barn, at least. We got no place at all, and he's hurt bad, and I don't know *what* we can do. We can't bid nobody good evening. We just can't, Doctor!"

The doctor was touched in spite of himself by the boy's distress. "There's a colored man named William Lucas down the road a mile or two. Go to him and he might let you sleep there," he said. "And before you leave, you can go around to the back door and the cooks will give you something to eat."

"David!" Johnny called sharply.

"You see, boy," the doctor said, "a man has duties and obligations. I have a name and a family, and in these days of violence—"

"David."

"Yes, Johnny, I'm coming," David called over his shoulder and then turned back to the doctor. "We'll go to that nigger's you said, and many thanks to you. A lady named Mrs. Quesenberry sent us some bread and stuff so we don't need nothing to eat," he said, "but it's sure nice of you to offer."

Johnny hobbled up to them now. "Yes, indeed," he said cavalierly.

"I must add my heartfelt expressions of gratitude to my companion's. I despair to think how we can ever repay your kindness. Come, David, we'll get Mr. Bryant to take us on."

Their driver had also approached. "I got to be getting back," he said, humble and low voiced in front of the grand doctor. "It's dark already."

"You wait a minute," the doctor said, and Bryant backed away, climbed docilely into the wagon, took up the reins and waited. "You are welcome to go around to the kitchen and be fed before you leave," he repeated to the haughty cripple. "What food you have with you, you can use later on when you may need it badly."

Johnny gave a short laugh.

"We maybe ought—" David said timidly, plucking at Johnny's sleeve.

"This is no time for false pride," the doctor said. In the gathering darkness his red and his gray faded out and only his white shirt front remained like a countenance.

"You are right, sir," Johnny said tightly, his eyes brilliant in the dark. "It is a time for *true* pride. Thus, I will accept your invitation. My friend and I shall go like beggars to your back door and there we shall break the bread of hospitality." Painfully he started off and David, looking back an apology, went after him.

But in the huge, lamp-lighted kitchen lit like a smithy with a roaring fire, beside the scrubbed pine table, he could not swallow a mouthful of the steaming meat and vegetables that a silent black woman of tremendous girth set before them. His companion ate ravenously and in less than a quarter-hour they were ready to set out again, the bottle of brandy sent out by the doctor under David's arm.

In the wagon again, starting for the cabin they hoped to get shelter in, Bryant said, "I should of been on my way long ago. I'm taking you on as a favor to the doctor. But I could of told you . . . the Stewarts ain't nobody to bust *in* on. They know who they mix with! Anybody else is out on their sit-downs."

It was dark enough now, dark and late enough so that nobody would see or know. Johnny put his burning face in his burning hands and cried without making a sound.

William Lucas, the Negro, said doubtfully that the two travelers could come in, he guessed, although his cabin had only one room and was not what he would call "fit for white folks." Johnny, once inside, hobbled to the table on which a candle burned, and clumsily bringing a rickety chair up to it, sat down and began to write with his stub of pencil on a blank page torn from his diary.

"What are you doing?" David asked curiously. "Old Bryant wants his money."

"Tell him to wait a minute," Johnny said. "I want him to deliver this note to Dr. Stewart on the way back. I am too galled, David, too galled. I have to tell him"—he went on writing, pressing hard on the pencil—"and I've got to *pay* him. I could never rest a minute, not a minute, as long as I live if he isn't *paid*." He scrawled the last word and folded it up with a five-dollar note inside. "There," he said. "You take that and tell Bryant to deliver it to Stewart. And here's his twenty dollars."

Puzzled, David did as he was bid.

A fearful Negro woman sitting in the corner saw that these young men were heavily armed with carbines and pistols, and saw that the ravaged, once-handsome face of the injured one had eyes that glittered more than ordinary eyes, so she got up softly and went to where her uneasy husband stood by the open door, waiting to let the boy back in. "Le's sleep in the shed," she whispered. "Le's not sleep in here."

When David entered and Bryant drove off, their host, with an embarrassed chuckle, said, "We's got a place we can sleep, so you jes' go ahead and take that bed in the corner."

Johnny, sitting by the table in a brown study, his head in his hand, said, "This is very good of you, really." He looked up, frowningly. There was something he ought to ask, something he ought to find out about a journey of some sort. What was it? Oh, yes. "How far is it to Port Conway?" he said.

Lucas gave his embarrassed chuckle again. "'Bout seven, eight miles, sir," he said.

"Could you take us there? Have you some sort of conveyance?"

"Well, sir, I's got a horse and I's got a spring wagon, but tomorrow I done promised—"



"I'll pay you well for it."

Lucas shot a glance at his wife and she slowly nodded her head.

"Well," he said, "I guess if we starts early—"

"Oh, the earlier the better," David put in.

"—why, I guess we can."

For some reason, Johnny did not want the sputtering little candle blown out. He wanted it left burning even after all the brandy was gone and they were lying fully dressed upon the lumpy bed.

"Ain't you sleepy?" David asked, his own eyes heavy as lead.

"Not very," Johnny said.

But David did not fall asleep at once, either. "Say, Johnny," he said as softly as the tiny room full of black shadows seemed to require. "Did you notice when we got there at that—that place of Dr. Stewart's, did you notice them young ladies in the pretty-colored dresses? There was four or five of them and they was having a stroll in the side garden, I guess. I seen 'em and then the next time I happened to look, after Dr. Stewart come out, they was gone. Did you notice them?"

"Yes," Johnny said, the tapestry of their loveliness and the loveliness of the landscape unrolling between him and the empty wall. "I noticed them." It pained his chest and he blinked the sight away.

"Well, coming here to this old cabin just now," David went on, "I was thinking how—they must of been just like the ones you was telling about when we was in Cox's grove. You know? The young ladies that was going to play the piano and—do all them nice things for us like you said—and—and—all that. Wasn't they?"

Johnny put his hand over his eyes and bit his parched lips. "Just about like that," he said finally.

"Glory, Johnny," David said, drawing a deep sigh, "here we are over in Virginia and it ain't no better than it was before. People is meaner than ever, and here we thought they'd be nicer, and here they're meaner. I don't know *why* folks act the way they do. And ain't you scared to go to Port Conway in broad daylight right down the road?"

"I'll—pretend I don't feel well and lie down in the wagon," Johnny said.

"What if the soldiers come?"

"Soldiers?" Johnny said, bewildered. "Oh, the war's over. . . ." Soldiers?

"Not *them* soldiers, Johnny. The ones that's after *us*. And the detectives."

"Don't you worry about that."

"Are we going to Richmond? Is that where we're going?"

"Yes, to Richmond. Yes, of course."

"Well, what if the people *there* ain't no better to us than everybody else has been so far? What if they turn us down like all the rest? What if they won't let us in nowhere and won't help us and won't do nothing? What will we do, Johnny?"

With great gentleness Johnny put out his hand and pulled the shawl up over David's shoulder. "You just go to sleep," he whispered. "Everything will be all right. I'll fix it. . . ."

But after David was sound asleep, he could only say Richmond, Richmond, Richmond and could go no farther. He thought if he could ask his father how the next line went, why, Father could help him. He would not ask Edwin, not for any money. It was dreadful to stand here in front of everybody and not know how the next line went. Mother said, "I wanted you to be the King of France, not an actor." But Father could help him, Father could teach him, and when he came home from California he would bring some gold nuggets, not to spend but to put up on the shelf like ornaments. "How does the next line go?" he would say. "'Tis thus, my child," Father would answer:

Fame is the spur that the clear spirit doth raise  
(That last infirmity of noble mind)  
To scorn delights and live laborious days;  
But the fair guerdon when we hope to find,  
And think to burst out into sudden blaze,  
Comes the blind Fury with th' abhorred shears  
And slits the thin-spun life. . . .

But no, Father, no. This play is quite another. You recite Lycidas, and that will not serve, at all. This is a *play*, Father, the play's the thing, you've said so, often. I had such trouble to learn the part, all

in that strange language, and nobody coming to rehearsals and the theater locked—I can't tell you—and my costume is so heavy, it must weigh a thousand pounds, and I have been ill, Father, oh, very ill, really. The overseer wounded me in the leg with his gun, I am wounded like Achilles and Cheiron and wasn't there someone else, Father? in the vulnerable part of my heel. They could not have touched me otherwise. And how does the next line go?

The lights burn blue. —It is now dead midnight.

Cold fearful drops stand on my trembling flesh.

What, do I fear myself? there's none else by:

Richard loves Richard; that is, I am I.

Is there a murderer here? No; yes; I am.

Then fly, what, from myself? Great reason why:

Lest I revenge. What? Myself, upon myself?

Alack, I love myself. . . .

I am a villain: yet I lie, I am not!

No, Father, no. *That is the wrong play.* I beseech you, in the name of God, do not tell me words I should not speak.

"Welcome, good Clarence, this is brother-like. . . ."

Not those, not those. I pray you, God, send me the lines I have forgotten.

When the loud knocking began and he opened his eyes to the scant morning in the little room, he called, "Yes, we are coming," and wondered why the Richmond Grays had sent for him so early. Then he remembered that he was in a Negro's cabin and that the Negro was going to take them to Port Conway. The thought of Dr. Stewart came and buttoned his chest in a waistcoat of pain. He remembered their present and future peril and hazard. It took him a little longer to recall that the boy he was shaking by the shoulder was David, and only when David sleepily opened his eyes and looked back at him was he quite, quite sure.

---

## XXII

*"At last resolving forward still to fare,  
Till that some ende they find, or in or out,  
That path they take, that beaten seemed most bare,  
And like to lead the labyrinth about. . . ."*

The Faerie Queene: SPENSER

---

IT WAS cloudy but it would not rain. Lucas, with his embarrassed chuckle, said not. He thought they would have fair weather. The fugitives had no trouble getting him to believe Johnny's made-up story that he felt too ill to ride any way except in the bottom of the wagon, where David, the shawl well around his neck and up over his ears, would sit beside him for the eight-mile ride. The Negro looked at Johnny when he told the fib, looked at him slantwise, but he believed it. When he went in the cabin to get a straw tick to put in the wagon bed, David had to laugh at how easy it was to fool him.

"He really believes you," he said. "Ain't that a joke? And here your leg don't even pain you no more, does it, Johnny?"

"No, it doesn't," Johnny said. "That's right. It doesn't really pain any more, at all, except that it feels so heavy and that's rather like a pain, you know. But, of course, it isn't the same thing."

"He believes it like the gospel." David had to laugh again.

"Before we go," Johnny said, frowning. He was frowning half the time, trying to keep his mind on the business at hand. It kept wanting to stray off. "Before we go," he began again, "fetch me a big dipper of water from the spring, will you?"

"Glory, Johnny, you've drank six dippers already. You sure must be thirstyl!"

David could hardly keep his face straight when old Lucas came

out with the straw mattress, and together they got Johnny settled in the bottom of the wagon. They certainly had fooled him!

"Don't have to be tol' *you's* sick, gentleman," the Negro said. "Shut my eyes and see *dat*. Anybody shuts dey eyes and sees *dat*."

It was a sandy road and the going was slow. When the wagon, creaking, almost came to a halt, Johnny, in a doze, sat up and asked, "Are we there?" He thought they had been traveling many hours.

"Why, this ain't but Edge Hill," their driver called back over his shoulder. "We's only at the forks of the road, where you branches if you wants to get to King George's Courthouse. They's a store here. You gentlemens wants to stop?"

"No," Johnny said. "Go on. We don't want to stop." He caught a glimpse of a small building just as David pulled him down flat on the mattress again.

"There's a man sitting on the steps," he whispered into Johnny's ear. "Maybe a detective!"

He wasn't, though. He knew their driver and his spring wagon. "Where you headed?" the man hollered.

"Down the country," Lucas hollered back respectfully.

Just as he had said, they had fair weather. Going slowly and tortuously over the sand road, they had bright sunshine and Johnny turned over and put his arm up over his face, it shone so in his eyes. But it felt good. As hot as he had been, as cold he had been. Now he was just right and that put a fine ease and indolence upon him. This is delightful, he thought, I hope we go on and on like this until we get to California. June will be surprised. "June," he would say, "give me a job. I don't get hoarse any more, have no trouble with my voice whatsoever. That was all a wicked story of Edwin's to turn the critics against me. But now that Edwin is dead. . . ." June would not have heard the news yet. I'll have to tell him that and, oh, a great many things, he thought. "Did you bring your costumes?" June would say. "Of course," he would say. "I must show you an auburn wig and you must hear the story of how I got it. Asia thinks it's very romantic. You see, it was at a ball, and I met a young lady named Miss Bessie Hale—" No, not Miss Bessie Hale. Something else. Let's see, it started with *D*. Dora, Delia, Dinah—what *was* her name?



Thinking about it made his head ache, and when he uncovered his eyes and looked up into the cloudless blue sky full of lemon light, that made his head ache worse, so he covered them again. Now really, it was delightful to lie here, not a care in the world, not a care in the world. . . .

It was past ten when they arrived at Port Conway and paid off Lucas and he started back.

The thing they had to do now was to cross over to Port Royal on the ferry. Johnny dragged his heavy leg and went on his crutches, with David matching steps beside him, and they went down to the landing. But the ferry was on the other side of the glassily flowing Rappahannock.

"Oh, fiddlesticks," David said. "Why couldn't she of been right here so we could of got on her and gone right across to Port Royal? No telling *how* long we got to wait, and no telling *who* will come by here and see us." He looked anxiously at Johnny. "Ain't that hell?"

It was too troublesome to stand. Suddenly, Johnny was much too tired. He began to sweat, and something about the sweating brought the nausea on. "Help me to sit down," he said, so David helped him, and sitting was a good deal better, only the sun began to blaze instead of shine and that made his nausea worse, not so much the heat as the light. It was difficult to get up and move to the shade, but David helped him again and he did it, and then in a little while he began to feel all right. Only now he was cold, wishing he were back in the sun, and very thirsty. "David, go and ask that man up there in front of that little house if we can have some water, will you?" he said. He added, when David obligingly got to his feet, "But don't say who we are. They're all rebels, but that doesn't make any difference. There's where we've gone wrong, revealing our identity. Just say we're going home from the war and if anybody asks, say I'm your brother and I'm wounded."

"Shouldn't we have on uniforms?" David asked, wrinkling his brow. "If somebody says they're a soldier, shouldn't they have on a uniform?"

"Not necessarily," Johnny said. He began to brush the soiled sleeve

of his black coat idly. "We could be coming home—just as we are. I don't know why not."

David's face cleared. "That may be better," he said, "not to tell nobody. Just as we are." He took a couple of steps and turned back smiling. "That sounds like the hymn Ma always sings. *Just as I am, without one plea, just as I am, I come to Thee*. She always sings it." He walked away whistling, but sudden homesickness choked off the tune.

The man in front of the little house was working on some fish nets. David got water from him and told how he and his brother were going home from the war.

"When's the ferry coming on back over?" he asked. "Pretty soon?"

"She's aground," the man said. "I wouldn't wonder she can't get back till the tide rises."

David took the water and went back and told Johnny that the tide had to rise before the ferry would return. But Johnny did not seem to care much. He only drank thirstily and said he was sure it would not be long.

"Yes, but, glory, Johnny, this ain't no place for us to sit around in broad daylight and—" He stiffened by what he thought he heard then, listened and held his breath.

Even Johnny, pale as he was, turned such a white that it was marvelous to see. He began to struggle to his feet, his eyes glazing. What was this? The hoofs of three horses that rounded the turn of the village street and came plunging and galloping down the road to the quay, bearing three armed horsemen! Terror transfixed the two. David was the first to dare see the sight that turned his knees to water with joy, his hands and middle to weak water—for they wore gray coats! Rebel caps! They were blessed, glorious, beautiful secesh! "Secesh," he bubbled. "Johnny, it's all right. They're secesh!"

They were. Although the youngest was eighteen, and the oldest not twenty-two, they were three Confederate officers.

When David turned to flesh and bone again, and Johnny, still shaking, sent him over to them, he asked, "What command do you belong to?"

The elder of the two captains looked at the shabby, dirty, tired-looking boy with the wide smile and anxious eyes a moment before he answered. "Why, Mosby's," he said. "Why do you ask?"

"Me and my brother was just wondering."

He looked so shy then that the Captain, his own age, put a word in to set him at ease. "You waiting for the ferry?" he asked.

"Yes," David said eagerly. "My brother and me. He's lame." He glanced back to where Johnny was getting to his feet with difficulty and putting his crutches under his arms. Their glances followed and came back to himself. "I asked that man over there," he pointed, "and he told me she's aground across the other side till the tide rises"

"Aground, hell," the Lieutenant said cordially. "I know that damned old nigger ferryman. I bet a dollar he's fishing." They strained their eyes to see and sure enough, over on the other side, somebody in a speck of calico shirt sat under an elder casting a line into the water. "Sure, he is," he said, laughing. "She don't need a special tide to come back on!"

David laughed heartily, too. It was cheering to stand and talk to these brave rebel officers as if he were one of them. "My brother," he went on eagerly, "he's lame, like I said. He was wounded down around Petersburg. We was in the fight, you know. Could you take us with you down to your lines, do you think?"

"What lines would you be talking about?" the boy Captain said teasingly. "There are no more lines. *You'd* ought to know that."

David blushed painfully but kept smiling. "Well," he said, cocking his head to one side and groping for words, "are you raising a—a command?"

"What would we be raising a command for?" the Lieutenant said. "To go fight the Battle of Waterloo? Don't you know when you're licked, boy?"

Their laughter fanned David's fire to a blaze, but he said, laughing with them, "Well, you see, if you was raising a command, we'd—we'd like to go south with you."

"No, boy, we're doing no recruiting," the Captain said.

"You don't understand," David blurted. "We're not really—what

I said, about him being my brother and all that. We're—he's—the man that shot Lincoln, and that's how he broke his leg, and that's how—" He broke off when he saw how silent they had grown, mouths hanging open, looking first at him and then at Johnny, who was painfully coming toward them. They got down off their horses.

"How do you do, gentlemen," Johnny said when he joined them.

They couldn't take their eyes off him. They nodded, as slowly as mechanical toys in the last stage of running down before they stop, an acknowledgment of his greeting.

He looked questioningly at David who did not return his glance but only said in a low voice, "This here is John Wilkes Booth, himself."

Another slow-motion nod from the three soldiers.

Johnny put his head up proudly. "We have had little luck with revealing our true identities," he said, "contrary to my expectations, and I had only now agreed with my companion that in future we should—"

"Glory, Johnny, they're rebels," David broke in, "and I *had* to tell them. There wasn't no way I could think of, to try to get them to take us with them, otherwise. Not that they've said they would, yet." He looked wistfully at them.

"Well, gentlemen," Johnny said, "you now have the doubtful pleasure of making my acquaintance." He made a little bow and put his left hand forward, palm down, to show the boyishly formed letters in faded ink, J.W.B., upon the back of it. "And my young companion is David Herold." David acknowledged the introduction with an embarrassed grin. "In our turn," Johnny went on, "we have the honor—?"

The youngest officer cleared his throat. "Captain Jett," he said. Johnny looked at the next man smilingly.

"Lieutenant Bainbridge," he said.

"And—?"

"Captain Ruggles," added the last man.

They did not put out their hands.

"Delighted, gentlemen," Johnny said, bowing again. "You understand we are worth a great deal of money to the man who turns us

in. Between us, something over a hundred and fifty thousand dollars at last count. Therefore, you may be as delighted to meet us as we are delighted to meet you." He stopped smiling.

"You call us gentlemen," Captain Ruggles said stiffly. "Gentlemen are not informers."

"We are of Mosby's command," the Lieutenant added as though that were all the proof of honor and integrity a man would ever need, as perhaps it was. His tone was haughty.

Captain Jett only set his lips, stared coldly and stood taller.

"Gentlemen," Johnny said, putting a hand up to his wet brow. "I—humbly apologize. I do indeed, with all my heart. But we have been badly used. I—" The nausea began to come over him again like a pall, he struggled to look for David in the audience out front where all the faces blurred together. To save his soul he could not remember what came next. He opened his dry mouth, closed it, opened it again. "Please—" he whispered. Someone sprang to help him and it was David, it was someone else, too, a man in a Confederate uniform with twinkling buttons. . . .

Sitting, with his head down, he began to be better, and in a few moments he could look up at them. "Richard's himself again," he said, out of countenance.

The officers had tied their horses and were now sitting, too, quite near him, except Captain Ruggles, who was standing and looking down at him curiously. "You are quite ill, aren't you, sir?" he said.

"Not ill," Johnny said. "It's the injury to my leg, you see. My ankle's broken. It was broken the night of the fourteenth, that's ten days ago—"

"But it don't pain you now," David put in boastfully. "You should of seen how he fooled that old nigger, said he felt sick and would have to lay down, and the old nigger let him lay in the bottom of the wagon all the way here to Port Conway. He didn't know no different, thought Johnny really *was* sick."

Captain Ruggles kept his eyes on Johnny.

"No, I have little pain, really," Johnny said. "There's a peculiar heaviness to my leg and side, which is rather uncomfortable, but it isn't what I would call pain. . . ."

"Is your leg swollen?" Captain Ruggles asked. "I have had quite



a lot of experience with wounds and injuries. I'll look at it if you want me to."

"That is very good of you," Johnny said, "but since we have no splints or bandages I think it is best to leave it as it is until I—reach my destination. But if you wish to examine it without—"

"I won't disturb the dressing," Captain Ruggles said, squatting down. He took off the cut-down shoe, pulled down the fine stocking, stiff with dirt and perspiration, and looked at the foot. He worked the tight pantleg up to Johnny's calf and worked gentle fingers enough under the hard, tight wrapping to lift it somewhat and peer beneath it, holding his breath so as not to breathe in more of the frightful stench than he had to. He looked quite a long time, looked at the toes again. The other two officers had slid over closer to see the injury, but now they caught a whiff of the odor, too, and involuntarily edged back to where they were. Captain Ruggles pulled the stocking back up, worked the pantleg back down over the thick, caked bandage and set the shoe back carefully on the foot. He stood up.

"Healing all right?" Johnny asked.

"Well, it wouldn't hurt to see a doctor," Captain Ruggles said, not meeting his eyes.

"Of course," Johnny said. "That is my intention. As soon as I reach my destination. As I say, the pain has stopped, except that sometimes the heaviness *feels* like pain—without being painful—if you know what I mean."

The two officers had been watching their companion's grave face. "What *is* your destination, sir?" Captain Ruggles asked gently.

"Richmond," David said, greatly pleased to mention it.

"Yes, Richmond," Johnny said. "Or—or somewhere else." It was wearisome to have to look upward, so he dropped his eyes to the Captain's dirty boots. He wanted badly to shut his eyes entirely but did not do so, fearing they would interpret this as rudeness.

"Can't you stay over in Port Royal for a while?" the Captain said. "Don't you know somebody there you could stay with?"

"Nobody—especially," Johnny said. "Not—that I can remember offhand. You see—" He felt ashamed that he did not know anyone in Port Royal, and then he felt sorry for himself that he did not. He

felt so sorry and ashamed that he could have wept like a woman.

"We don't know nobody in Port Royal," David said. "In fact, we been treated like dogs the whole time! In fact—"

"I know somebody in Port Royal," Captain Jett put in suddenly. "She'd let him stay there, I'll bet. Old Miss Peyton. She's got a big house and there's only her and her brother. She'd take them in, I'll bet!"

"Let's try her," the Lieutenant said, getting to his feet and brushing off his trousers.

"How about the damn ferry?" Captain Ruggles asked.

David scrambled eagerly up and now made for the edge of the landing, where he stood staring with his hand shading his eyes as though this action would bring the boat over upon the instant.

"Don't tell anyone who we are," Johnny said, beginning to pant a little with excitement. They had friends now. Protectors. God be thanked, they would find a refuge, they were going to make it all right, going to be safe at last. He tried to stop the trembling of his lips, tried to keep back the surge of dizzy sickness that relief brought. Friends at last . . . protectors . . . it was almost more than he could believe. "They won't help us if they know. Please—" he said. "Just say we are two brothers returned from—the war. Boyd. Say our name is Boyd. James and—and David." He had not the wit or energy left to replace David's name with another, but that would not matter. Nothing mattered now except that they were going to make it, going to be all right.

Lieutenant Bainbridge, close to David on the landing, cupped his hands and shouted through them. They all jumped when he blasted. "You over there! Ferryman!" he yelled. "Lay down that fish pole and get that boat over here! We're soldiers, waiting to cross!"

"That will fetch him," Captain Jett said. "Those damn niggers have guilty consciences. He's afraid we'll take his hat off with a shell or two. That'll fetch him, you see if it doesn't." Laughing, he got up and turned to give Johnny a hand.

Johnny laughed, too, immensely tickled. He began to feel quite well, quite like himself, hardly sick at all.

The rule was that horsemen were to dismount when crossing on the ferry, but though the silent Negro who poled them over glared

at the crippled, white-faced man on the sorrel, he stayed right on his horse as big as life. "Thank God, thank God," the man said, when the boat grated against the Port Royal landing. The Negro ferryman did not recall having seen him before, but guessed he must be a returning resident changed beyond recognition by war, he was in such a fever to get home. That did not excuse him. He had no business staying on his horse when the rule was that horsemen had to dismount. However, all the young massas in their gray uniforms were generally pretty touchy with colored folks these days, as though they had been to blame for everything, so the Negro ferryman had to be satisfied with merely looking his hearty disapproval.

They put Johnny on Captain Jett's horse and let him ride onto the ferry, though they led the other horses. It was hard for him to mount but the minute he had the reins in his hands he looked bigger somehow, perhaps the size he had been before disaster shrunk him. It came to Jett that though he was so different now, he must once have been a remarkably handsome and compelling young man.

While David and Captain Ruggles stood close to him, carrying on a desultory conversation, Captain Jett sought out Ruggles. "Is he hurt bad?" he asked softly.

"He'll be dead in a week," Ruggles murmured back. "His foot and leg's full of gangrene. God knows how he's kept going. God knows how he ever got this far. Certainly, he can't go much farther."

Johnny turned his head and saw them, smiled and gave a little debonair wave of the hand.

They returned it with mock salutes.

"God," Captain Jett said, going over to the railing and leaning his elbows on it. He stared down at the dented water. "Poor devil, thinking he's going to get away. Live."

"Yes," Captain Ruggles said, coming to stand beside him. "It's a joke on somebody, I don't know who." But he did not smile. "How are they going to pay death that hundred-thousand-dollar reward? How are they going to stand death up and pin a medal on his chest?"

Old Miss Peyton remembered Willie Jett very well. But how he had grown! She set her glasses on her nose the better to see him.

Yes, indeedy. And my, here he was an army officer, and here it was only a little while ago that his mother was tripping by this very house going to confirmation. What kind of an officer was he? A sergeant?

"No, ma'am, Miss Peyton," Willie Jett said. He glanced to his left at the men and horses at the gate and then returned his gaze to her. "What I came to ask you about—we've got two comrades with us. One of them was badly wounded. Could you take them in for a few days until he's well enough to go on?"

"Dear me," she said, "wounded. What a shame." She shut the door behind her and came and stood on the edge of the steps, staring frankly at the men. "Which one is he? Oh, I see. The man with the bandage on his leg."

Behind her, Captain Jett began to nod his head exaggeratedly and Captain Ruggles, behind whom Johnny had been riding, took the cue and got down and turned to help him off. David and Bainbridge dismounted from the Lieutenant's horse.

She was staring harder now. "They don't have uniforms on, do they? Two of them don't have uniforms on, do they? They're the ones, the injured one and that other one? He don't look any older than you."

"No, ma'am," Captain Jett said.

"Why are they—carrying so many arms, Willie?"

"Well, ma'am, you see they—"

She took him by the arm, paling. "I can't take them in," she said quickly. "You must excuse me. The truth is, my brother is not at home and I would not dare risk his displeasure by opening our house to strangers."

"When will he be home, Miss Peyton, ma'am?" Jett said anxiously.

"I don't know," she said. "You really must excuse me. Tell them not to bring those men up here. Tell them at once, Willie. They are opening the gate."

"Wait," the young Captain called. "Get back on the horses! I'm coming in a minute!"

She was inside the door now, looking through half a foot of opening. "I'm very sorry, Willie," she said, "but you must understand that a lone woman—and my brother is not at home. You really must

excuse me but I must shut the door, I have a cake in the oven, I must—”

“Wait, Miss Peyton, ma’am, please,” Jett said. “Where can we take him? He’s—very sick and needs shelter.”

“I don’t know, I’m sure, Willie. I’m sorry, but—”

“Isn’t there *somebody*?”

“Why don’t you go out to the Garrett farm?” she said hastily.

“Really, I’ve got to—you know where Garrett lives—his farm’s about three miles outside town on the Bowling Green road. To the—to the left. He knew your ma’s folks well. Please excuse me, Willie, I’m very sorry.” The withered old face she shut from view was something else besides sorry. It was frightened.

“Her brother isn’t home,” Captain Jett explained when he got out to the gate. “She daren’t take anyone in without his consent. Afraid he’d be mad, she says.” He did not look at Johnny who did not look anywhere but straight and blindly ahead at the back of Captain Ruggles’ neck. “She suggested old Garrett’s farm out on the Bowling Green road. It might be better anyway, come to think of it, out in the country like that. It might be lots better.”

David, up behind Lieutenant Bainbridge, cast an anxious look at Johnny. “It’ll be *lots* better,” he called cheerfully, but when they started off he drew a deep and tired sigh.



---

# XXIII

---

*"Pitch here a tent, while the old horse grazes:  
By the old hedge-side we'll halt a stage.  
It's nigh my last above the daisies:  
My last leaf'll be man's blank page,  
Yes, my old dear! and it's no use crying:  
Juggler, constable, king, must bow.  
One that outjuggles all's been spying  
Long to have me, and has me now."*  
Juggling Jerry: GEORGE MEREDITH

---

HE OPENED his eyes because he thought he heard Asia singing, and he wanted to tell her they would have time for a ride before supper, but it was not Asia, it was a little girl calling the chickens to come and feed. A very nice little girl with two long braids. He could see a glimpse of her challis skirts far away in the chicken yard, but it wearied him to look out the corners of his eyes, so he looked straight upward instead, into the snow of the apple tree. All the dark branches were thick with it, and it shook down sometimes upon him. He looked as far as he could between the snowy boughs into the cloudless blue sky, far enough to see a star so young it could not shine. That sufficed, and he shut his eyes again.

What a long time he must have slept here under the apple tree on this quilt, on this soft pillow the kind lady of the house brought out to him. He must give them all passes to see the play, in the best seats. Let's see, that would be how many? There was Mr. Garrett, Mrs. Garrett, the two boys just home from Richmond and still wearing their gray uniforms, the two small boys, the little girl who was feeding the chickens, and the plain young lady, Mrs. Garrett's sister, who lived with the family. They were wonderfully nice

people. Tears gathered beneath his eyelids when Johnny remembered Mr. Garrett saying yes, of course, he could stop with them until his wound was better and he could travel.

Captain Jett said, "Oh, thank you, sir," while Johnny stood, ready to faint with relief. "This man and his brother were our comrades and we don't like to ride on until we know they will have shelter for a time."

Mr. Garrett said, "Gladly. I am so thankful to have my own two boys back safe and sound that when another man's sons need help on their way home I want to aid them if I can."

Then Captain Jett said, "I am going to Bowling Green for a day or two, but Captain Ruggles here and Lieutenant Bainbridge are going back to Port Royal to spend the night."

David came over to where Johnny was fixing his crutches under his arms, and said bashfully, "Johnny, why couldn't I ride into town with them? I need a new pair of shoes awful bad." He held his foot up so Johnny could see the hole in the bottom of the sole.

He gave David money and David said, "Lieutenant, could I ride into town with you? I got to get me some shoes."

"I guess so," the officer said. "But how will you get back? Oh, well, maybe I'll ride out tomorrow and you can come with me."

"I can walk out," David said. "It ain't so far."

When they were gone, and Johnny was all alone here in this strange place, the panic rose up that David had abandoned him and would not come back. But it lasted only a little while, because after all it was not so very strange a place. It came to him, when he took a seat on the steps with Mr. Garrett and the eldest son, that the Garrett farm was the most familiar place in the world. No matter how far away he went, he always came back here, always had, always would. Not a stick nor a stone but what he knew it. How many times had he come up that long lane from the turnpike, the same clouds of dust always behind his horse's heels, the ever-familiar house to his left on the gentle hill in the locust grove? How many times pushed open the gate to the ample yard, gone up the walk to the porch that ran along the whole front of the house, walked up the three shallow steps? Inside the house, what did he not recognize? What was new to him? The tidy, simple parlor, large, bare kitchen,

the upstairs bedroom he would share with the two small sons, the other chambers, he knew them one and all, as he knew the pendulumed clock, the steep staircase and worn chairs. They and he were always coming back together again! Yet he had never been here before in his life.

He would tell Asia how odd it was.

"You see, I would always reach this place eventually. I would have all this frightful trouble, and then here, suddenly, I would be riding up this lane. I knew it the way I know, better than I know, the old Bel Air farm," he would say. "Imagine a huge square with a little hill in the middle covered with locust trees and apple trees, a house nestling in the middle of them. One side of the square would be this long lane running up, two sides would be fenced, one side would be the line of a black immortal forest. Now imagine this perfectly familiar house, Asia, with all the various farm buildings behind, the cow shed, corn cribs, stable and the tobacco barn. This is the place I always came to, always arrived at eventually. For instance, take the tobacco barn. I know it better than I know my own face—but that is no comparison because my face is so changed now, Asia, I looked in the parlor mirror and I thought it belonged to someone else, it was so waxy yellow, you know, the eyes so sunken and the cheeks so hollow and the hair—but the hair wasn't mine at all. This would be Monday afternoon, you see, and that night I always ask if I can shave before supper because I have over a week's growth of beard on my face, and then I— But I was telling you about the tobacco barn, Asia. You know how they build them so that the tobacco can dry with plenty of air blowing through? They leave four-inch spaces in the boarding on the sides. I will whisper something to you. *That gives it the exact look of a cage.* It's got a locked door in front. I find I must always be very careful not to go into it, because when I do, I find I can't get out again. But that comes later, Asia. At first—"

It was very kind of Mrs. Garrett to come with that quilt and pillow in her arms and touch him on the shoulder and ask him if he wouldn't like to lie down under the apple tree for a nap, and then help him do so and send out a glass of cold milk by the little girl with the long braids. For at the moment she did he was feeling quite awful, and to discourse upon matters of war and politics with

the two men and keep them from knowing how hard it was to think, to say the simplest things, made him sweat. It was very kind of her to help him make a bed on the soft grass. He must remember to give the whole family passes to the show, in the best seats.

He must have gone right to sleep, into the sweetest sleep imaginable, and slept two hours at least.

Now the little girl was clucking at the chickens, and the first star was out in the sky that even in the five minutes since he had wakened changed from blue to less and more than blue. He thought happily, I feel so well! He thought happily, there will be no more bad days! Only good days! He thought happily, I must go and ask if I may shave before supper!

Jack Garrett said, of course he could shave and welcome. The first minute Johnny looked into the little glass it made his hand tremble, the face he saw was so utterly unfamiliar. But shaving fixed that all right. By the time he finished it was habitual and beautiful again, when memory, aiding him unbeknownst, filled it out, brought the overbright eyes forward, turned up and freshened the sere lips, amended the cheeks to pink.

Behind that restored face, at the supper table he felt so like himself that he charmed them all in the old way. But his stomach took a stand of its own and, though he had a helping of all the good things, it betrayed him, and he could swallow very little. He apologized to Mrs. Garrett, explaining that he had been somewhat indisposed for some time and that his stomach was upset. Would she, who had prepared food that was fit for the gods, forgive him if he could not eat it? He apologized to Mrs. Garrett's plain young sister and she blushed, his fine manners set her on so high a pedestal. Up there, she instantly exchanged her own manners for a set so graceful and exalted that the boys stared. Both she and Mrs. Garrett said he must not apologize, they understood exactly what a trial stomach trouble must be.

Mrs. Garrett asked him if he had ever thought of gallstones.

Johnny considered this earnestly and said no, never.

"Well, it wouldn't hurt to think of them," Mrs. Garrett said. "Aunt Innocent Clotide had them for forty-three years, never suspecting, digestion always acting up, thin as a rail, and then she



took this Chief Pugamaugen Gallstone and Heartburn Remedy, and I tell you, you wouldn't have known the woman from that day on. Would he, Pa?"

Mr. Garrett said no. For his part, he said, fish alone of all foods "did him that way," no matter what the kind or season.

The two young men, returned from the war only the day before and still in their shabby uniforms, did not speak much. They were either too hungry or too shy or both. The sadly muddled and erupted complexion of one kept him in a state of unease under the eyes of strangers, and the other had a slight impediment of speech which made *r* and *l* come out as *w*. It was as well, when the family pressed him to do so, that he refused to tell the little story of the Captain that had amused them all so much last night. The blemished brother, ducking his head and also refusing, Mr. Garrett did the best he could with it. "Well, they was telling about this company," he said, "that was straggling along, not paying no attention to order in the ranks or nothing else, they was that wore out, and here come the Captain hurrying up, madder than a wet hen. 'Close up, boys!' he hollers. 'Damn you all to hell, close up! Why, if the enemy was to fire on you when you're straggling along that way, they couldn't hit a everlasting damn one of you! Close up!' and doggoned if they didn't close up, quick as a wink!" It was all Mr. Garrett could do to finish it, and they all laughed so much they had to wipe their eyes, even the bashful boys, and Johnny joined them heartily.

Well and natural as he felt, he had to discard story after story which might have diverted them because the telling would take too much effort and breath. To the ladies' disappointment, and his own (he had fancied that he might recite for them "The Beautiful Snow" in the parlor later on), when the meal was over he begged to be excused and to be shown his bed.

He knew the steep little room under the eaves with the two beds in it, so hard to reach by the tall stairs. "They show me where I shall sleep," he would tell Asia when he recounted the strange adventure, "and it's always there, under the eaves, and the two smallest boys sleep in the other bed. They come up later than I do, and catch the gleam of my pearl field glasses in the starlight shining through the window. They tiptoe over to the chair and take them up and look



through them at the ghostly apple blossoms outside, but then they lay them down and go to bed. They kneel down and say their prayers, can't get them said fast enough, the way I could never get mine said fast enough, and then they crawl under the covers and disappear in the pillows. I hear them whispering. I always hear this on the first night I am there. That would be the Monday night. Then they fall asleep and I fall asleep and where am I then, dear Asia?"

I am . . . not there. I walk all night on two light legs, I have exchanged the dead and heavy leg for these. I promised Ella to tell her what I decided to do—so I go there, but she is not at home, the door is locked, the little squirrel is not at home. No one is. No matter where I go, they are all gone. They are all at the funeral. They are burying Edwin whom they have cunningly preserved by scooping out his whole insides and filling him with Chief Pugamaugen Gallstone and Heartache Remedy which has turned him to pure Italian marble. He will be a monument forever. I do not walk, I run, to put as much distance between me and the cage as I can, for if I get far enough away I am quite safe. I grow lonely and worn but behind me my pursuers are more than the soldiers of France, more than the enemies of England. They look like the black immortal forest but I am not deceived. They are moving men. I have a long journey before morning breaks. I must cross the Potomac, the Rappahannock, the Afton, the Jordan, a river whose name I do not know. . . . They have hidden my boat and my horse and all my wardrobe, but I will procure others. I have powerful friends—Dr. Stewart, George Alfred Townsend, a very tall man whose name has slipped my mind at the moment, very tall, wears a black suit, gives public addresses—you must know him, very influential, everyone knows him. And Ella. I see Ella down at the end of Pennsylvania Avenue. I run toward her on my light legs. She sees me and runs toward me, there is no one but us running, and we meet, and I take her in my arms, and we kiss, we kiss, but it is not she, it is Asia in my arms like a lover in my lover's arms. I will show her where I have cut our two names in a heart on the bark of the tree. See, Asia, how I have cut our names. She spells out J-o-h-n, she spells out l-o-s-t and turns her eyes upon me crying, turns smoke, turns air, glimmers, while I reach

for her and they come behind me. . . . The lieutenant makes a trumpet of his hands and shouts so loud that they fall back. I am safe now and fleeing swiftly through the abandoned city, but he keeps shouting . . . his terrible voice will split my head in two.

After the rooster woke the sun and himself, though it rose dutifully and beautifully, Johnny lay abed until the call came for breakfast and the two little boys, well trained, dressed with the speed of city firemen and went leaping down the stairs like kangaroos. Then he got up and dressed, but so inept was he, so unexpectedly unsteady and unhandy in every part, that breakfast was long over when by some miracle he managed to get down the steep stairs with his crutches and hobble into the kitchen. The women felt sorry that his stomach was not yet "settled." On the chance it would be, they had a second batch of beaten biscuits in the oven, made especially for him. Apologetically he drank his coffee and said he never had been so put out by anything in his life. Mrs. Garrett reminded him to think of gallstones, and he promised he would.

But outside on the quilt under the white and sun-filled tree, lying with his eyes shut in late-morning country fragrance, he was too contented to think of anything, only that he breathed in and breathed out, that blossoms fell upon him, that country noises and faraway children's laughter reached his ear like well-composed music well played.

After midday dinner, with the lack of appetite for which he had again to beg pardon, though he contrived to swallow a few morsels and drink his strong coffee, he went out and sat on the front porch with his host. There was a Fourth of July air of holiday about the farm that day, and had been the day before. Only the most necessary chores were done. As Mr. Garrett said, it wasn't every day a man had two good boys returned to him without a scratch, although they had done their part from Shiloh right on through to the Battle of Richmond. That called for a little rest from labor, he thought. That called for a little celebrating.

The young rebel with the speech defect came around the house with an old six-barreled revolver. "We're going to try to hit a tawget," he said. "Would you like to do a wittle shooting?"

"Yes, indeed," Johnny said. "I'm not such a bad hand at it." But

it was such trouble to get up and get out there that by the time he dragged himself down the steps and across the yard to where they had gathered, Mr. Garrett and the two big and two small boys, he was drenched with sweat and his hands shook. They were steady again when his turn came.

"You see that hole there in the gate post?" Johnny said lightly. "Well, I can put every ball in it." He raised the old pistol that frequently hung fire and, squinting, shot one, two, three, four, five, six times. He handed over the gun with a flourish, smiling.

The youngest boy ran to examine the hole. "You never hit it once!" he called. "Not once, mister!"

They all went forward to look, Johnny, too, and it was true. His heart began to pound horribly. He began to feel so weak it seemed as if he must fall. Most terrible of all, his mouth worked and he was going to cry, the tears were gathering, they would spill down his cheeks. They all laughed, not ordinary laughter but the wild and prolonged shouting of succubi that grated on his nerves so that he thought he would have to yell at them to stop. Trying to keep from yelling at them, he drew his damp and ice-cold hand across his eyes, blotting away his tears. They kept on laughing for a long, long time while he bit his parched lower lip between his teeth and did not yell or fall to the ground writhing, and when they stopped, the farm was not the safe, idyllic place of refuge it had been. The sun went behind a cloud. The forest strode several paces closer. The tobacco barn, the cage, edged nearer. The blossoms yellowed, began to wither as of today. The house shrank, became mean and secretive. All faces became mean and secretive, even the dogs'.

Mr. Garrett took the revolver and broke it open. "Don't take it so hard, Mr. Boyd," he said. "Look here. All the bullets are still in it! It didn't fire. No wonder you couldn't hit your target!"

Again the wild, prolonged laughter. Johnny forced himself to hear it out, murmured something, and then, with the sun gone, the wind rising, he turned and hobbled to his quilt, where he lay down under the withering yellowing tree and put his hand up over his eyes. Bang! bang! bang! they kept on shooting, while the forest stepped closer and the windows of the sly house glittered on him like eyes.

How could he have imagined David would come back? David would never come back! No one would ever come but the pursuers, and when they did, how could he run, with a gunny sack of stones for a left leg? And if he ran, where would he run? Where did a man run to? What was the name of the place? He kneaded his face in his hands and thought, I must not scream, I must not make a sound, for if I scream they will all be upon me. Deathly sick, hot, cold, frenzied, he said over and over, David will never come back, whispered it in case they were listening. Time stopped under the apple tree that stopped dying because time stopped and Johnny, kneading his face, whispered how David would not come. . . .

But he did come! The little girl with the braids flashed by and called, "Your friend's coming up the road!" He sat bolt upright. "No," he said, "no, no." But it was true, he could see when he strained his eyes and looked over the gate. It was David. He was coming. He reached for his crutches in a delirium of joy. All the clocks started to run again, the apple tree to perish as a woman perishes by petal and loosened petal . . . and he went dragging to the gate on his sack of stones to meet his dear companion, to embrace his only friend.

Going out to the farm, David riding up behind the Lieutenant, and Captain Ruggles cantering along beside, the young officers told the boy that John Wilkes Booth was a sicker man than he knew. They told him about the gangrene. They said that John Wilkes Booth was going to die in a very little while, the poison was creeping all over him and would stifle his heart. David got his handkerchief out and blew his nose, but they said for him not to feel bad, because when Johnny was gone it would be so much easier for David to escape by himself. He could see that. It would be easier.

"I found out about that battery over at Guinea Station, near Louisa Courthouse," he said. "They're Maryland boys and they ain't surrendered yet. I'm going to tell Johnny. It's only about twenty miles away. That's where I thought me and him could go. We can go over there and join up with them. We'd be all right with a bunch of soldiers like that that ain't surrendered. Maybe they never *will* surrender. That's just what we're looking for. He's going to be so glad. But if it's like you say," he added woefully, "I'll just have to



wait and then go and join up with 'em by myself, when—Johnny's gone. Is it going to take very long?" He leaned over and asked Captain Ruggles, "Is it going to take very long?"

"Wilkes Booth won't last three days, I'd bet my hat," the Captain said.

"Glory," David said, hanging his head. "He was going to learn me to act on the stage. And I—can't picture him dead. When I try to picture him dead, I can't, he's always got his eyes open with all those different looks on his face and he's talking, nobody else ever sounds like Johnny, and he's planning all these different schemes and—I just can't picture it."

He climbed down off the Lieutenant's horse at Garrett's lane, and when the two officers headed back for Port Royal David started plodding up it on his thick-soled new shoes. No, he could not imagine Johnny dead, and the more he tried, the sillier it seemed. Just because he had a broken leg! Those officers didn't know so much. That Captain Ruggles didn't know so much. "He says he ain't even been duck hunting," David thought disparagingly. "He can't even carry a tune. What does he know about Johnny?" And when he looked up and saw him hobbling to the gate to meet him, he knew for sure it was all a lie. Johnny was up, and dressed, and just the same as ever! Captain Ruggles couldn't have been wronger if he'd been Old Burnside himself.

Johnny was just as glad to hear about the Maryland battery that hadn't surrendered yet, as David had known he would be. "I heard it in Port Royal last night," David said. "The Captain and Lieutenant let me stay where they stayed. But I paid for my own vittles, naturally. How do you like my new shoes, Johnny?" He held one foot out and admired it, planted it beside the other and admired them both. "Ain't they fine? And besides, I got better'n a dollar left." He dug into his pocket for it.

"Keep it," Johnny said. "They're fine. But what about this battery?" He fixed his too-bright eyes on David's face.

"Well, I'll tell you," David said, reluctantly looking up from his treasures. "I heard about 'em last night and I knew they was what we was waiting for. They're this battery over at Guinea Station. That's about twenty miles from here—and they ain't surrendered



yet or ain't even going to, and they's Maryland boys, every blame one of 'em."

"We'll join them," Johnny said, panting a little. "We'll try and join them tonight. And we'll stay with them till the coast is clear, and then—and then—"

"And then what'll we do, Johnny?" David asked, his eyes slipping again to the nice new shoes.

"Come on," Johnny said. "There's a big map hanging on the wall in the parlor. We'll take it down and I'll show you just where we'll go."

He studied it carefully. They had it on the floor and were crouching over it. Johnny had his stub of pencil out. "You see, David," he said, "here's our route. First to Norfolk. That's here." He made a faint cross. "Then to Charleston, South Carolina. That's here." He made another. "Then Savannah, Georgia. That's here. Then Galveston, Texas. Then Mexico! Here, David. Look where I'm pointing. Mexico. We'll go down there into the silver mines," he said, lowering his voice so that the women in the next room would not hear. "Who would ever think of looking for us in the silver mines of Mexico?"

"Nobody," David said, delighted. "Why didn't we think of that before?"

"Well, we've thought of it now," Johnny said, laughing.

"Glory, Johnny, silver mines! Maybe we can get rich at the same time! Why didn't we *think* of it? There's nothing to prevent us getting rich at the same time, is there?"

"Nothing that I know of," Johnny said. "I don't know what it would be."

They had just settled themselves on Johnny's quilt under the apple tree, and David, measuring the long rays of sunlight slanting through the clouds, had inquired with interest, "What time's supper around here?" when a pair of horsemen riding up the lane attracted their attention. While Johnny struggled to follow, David scrambled up and hurried over to the gate. "Well, say," he hollered cordially. "I thought I give you fellows your walking papers!"

"You did," Captain Ruggles said. "We came back to warn you."

"Warn us?" Johnny said, coming up behind David. "What's up?"

"We met a fellow from our command riding out from Port Royal," Lieutenant Bainbridge said. "He hailed us. We were on our way back to town."

"He told us a party of Union cavalymen are leaving town and heading for Bowling Green down this road." Captain Ruggles twisted in his saddle and pointed down to the turnpike. "They'll be along in a few minutes. He said for us to make for cover, in case we didn't have our paroles handy. So we came to warn you," he said. "It's you they're after."

"Get over into these woods," Lieutenant Bainridge said. "They'll never find you."

"David," Johnny said, "run upstairs and get our guns. They're all in the attic room where I slept, shoved under the bed. Get them! And hurry, for God's sake. I'll start for the woods." David raced off and Johnny shakily pulled his crutches tighter in under his arms, ready to move. He took two quick, uncertain steps, stopped and turned back. "Thank you, gentlemen," he said. "You are gallant and brave. I shall never forget your kindness to us and trouble on our behalf."

"Don't mention it," Captain Ruggles said, not looking at Johnny.

"Don't mention it," the Lieutenant repeated gruffly.

"Good-by, gentlemen," Johnny continued. "And if we do not meet again, God go with you."

"The—same to you, sir," Captain Ruggles said.

Darkness was falling when the two fugitives came out of the woods and slowly made their way across the fields toward the lamp-lighted windows of the Garrett house. How Johnny, crippled as he was, and on his crutches, got over to that black retreat as fast as he did was a mystery to David, for now he could seem barely to crawl. Supper was over, David feared, but Johnny, speaking for the first time in many minutes, told him not to worry, that the Garretts would feed them whether supper was over or not.

There was a strange quietness about the house as they approached it, like a fortress to the center of which all inhabitants have with-

drawn soundlessly, preparing in utmost secrecy for an attack which is certain to come. Two figures disengaged themselves from the shadows of the front porch and came to meet them, the Garrett sons in Confederate gray that melted into the evening and left only their stemless faces.

Jack, the elder, spoke first. "There's been cavalry by the house this evening. Rode down the road toward Bowling Green. They're after Lincoln's assassins. Now, why should you fellows take to your heels and make for cover over in the woods?"

William said sternly, "We'd wike a stwaight answe. Haven't you got pawoles?"

"Certainly, we have paroles," Johnny said. "I'll show them to you."

"Johnny—" David began. "We haven't—"

Jack said, "Now listen, because we mean business. We don't want any trouble around here that's going to scare Ma and the girls half to death. If you fellows have done something you're afraid of the consequences of, you clear out."

"My dear young man," Johnny said, "we happened to get in a little brush over in Maryland, and for the time being we happen to want to avoid—"

"What kind of twouble?" William said.

"Nothing worth speaking of," Johnny said. "A couple of Union soldiers met with an unfortunate accident and—"

"All right," Jack said. "You know your own affairs. But the thing for you to do is clear out. We don't want trouble here. We don't want Ma and the girls scared, and Pa's an old man and we don't want him worried."

"We want you to weave," William added flatly.

"Nothing would give us greater pleasure," Johnny said. "We had planned anyway to try to get over to Guinea Station tonight and were going to ask you if you could take us or lend us some sort of conveyance."

"We haven't got one," Jack said.

"But you have horses. Let us take them."

"No," the young man said. "We can't, they're all we've got and we can't spare them."

"Sell them to us then," Johnny persisted. "Ask anything you want within reason."

"The horses are not for sale."

"Then how in the name of God do you expect us to clear out? You have eyes, sir, and you must see that I am badly crippled. Do you expect me to walk twenty miles on these crutches?"

"That's mean," David said. "That's just downright mean. You should of heard what them officers said. Why, Johnny couldn't make it down to the *road*, let alone twenty miles, with his leg bad like it is."

"He made it to the fowest fast enough," William said with fine sarcasm.

"Our old nigger, Ned Freeman," his brother said, "that lives on the place—he's got a horse and wagon. He may be able to take you if you pay him to make it worth his trouble."

"Whatever he asks," Johnny said.

"William," Jack said. "You run across to Ned's cabin and ask if he can take these two gentlemen over to Guinea Station tonight."

The three were sitting on the steps in a sulky silence when William came back and reported that Ned had gone into town and his wife did not know when he would be back. However, she promised that the first thing in the morning he would be there with his wagon.

"Well," Jack said, getting to his feet. "I suppose that's the best we can do. I suppose we might as well go in and go to bed. Mr. Boyd, or whatever your name is, you will take the room you had last night and I guess your brother will have to sleep with you."

"Come on, Johnny," David said. "Although we ain't had anything to—"

"If you don't mind," Johnny said, "I must refuse your kind offer. I do not think I could climb the stairs again. I am—rather unwell."

"But you can't sleep outdoors," Jack said. "We'll help you upstairs."

"No," Johnny said, his breath coming short when he thought of the smallness of the room, the lowness of the ceiling. "I shall be quite comfortable here on the porch. However, David could go up and go to bed if he wants to. I shall stay here."

"I ain't going up there without you," David said. "You and me can stretch out right here on the porch. It'll be better than that old hard ground in the grove at least, huh, Johnny?"

"Why, the dogs won't weave you awone two minutes," William said exasperatedly.

"If you won't go upstairs," Jack said, "and I know blame well Ma wouldn't want anyone sleeping in her parlor, why, I guess the only other place for you to sleep is the tobacco barn."

"The—tobacco barn?" Johnny repeated oddly. There wasn't light enough from the narrow moon to make out the low building but he turned his head and looked fearfully in that direction.

"There's straw on the floor," Jack said. "You'd be comfortable enough there."

"Pwenty of fwesh aiw," William put in.

"We've got some furniture stored for some of the Port Royal folks in one end," his brother went on, "but there's plenty of room. You'd be comfortable enough in the tobacco barn."

"That'll be a good place, Johnny," David said, coming over to him and taking his arm and helping him get to his feet. "We'll sleep fine there, you see if we don't, and tomorrow we'll get a nice, early start for Guinea Station."

"The cage," Johnny whispered. "The cage."

(I always go into it at last, Asia. I feared it from the beginning—I tried to escape—but it was no use. And here I am, in spite of everything, they leading and myself following, making straight for the cage. It is so again and again. It is so this Tuesday night, and so forever. . . . I walk into it. There is no escape.)

"What, Johnny?" David said.

"Nothing, David."

"I thought you said something about a cage."

The Garrett boys did not seek their beds, either, that night. Instead, they took blankets and bedded down in the stable, so that if the mysterious Boyd brothers decided to steal their horses and make off in the night, they would have more on their hands than they bargained for.



---

## XXIV

*"Count o'er the joys thine hours have seen,  
Count o'er thy days from anguish free;  
And know, whatever thou has been,  
'Tis something better—not to be."*

—BYRON

---

EVERY DAY and night since the large crime of assassination was done in the land, astrologers had been busy spying among constellations for its dark doer. They all knew which way he had gone, what star to dislodge from its imbeddedness to find him scurrying from under. Spiritualists in black rooms called spectral shapes to come and point which way he went, and they materialized and pointed like branches of the whitethorn in all directions. Clairvoyants lay underfoot like the ruined statues of Stymphalis considering behind granite eyelids where he could now be and announcing where the place was in tongues so nobody else would get the reward. All ages, sizes, colors and shapes had visions by broad daylight and symbolic dreams by night. They saw him as plainly as possible. He was in a tree, down a well, dead, alive, dressed like a Negro, an Indian, a woman, in Kansas City, Haddonfield, on a ship bound for Spain. They wrote letters to all the papers, stood in line to see Stanton, Woods, anybody, and give the good word for one hundred thousand dollars that would effect the capture of John Wilkes Booth.

The soldiers and the detectives, being human, wanted the money too. And because they did, it was hard to keep them in line. They kept scattering on wild-goose chases after the quarry until their leaders despaired of ever finding him save on wild-goose chases of their own. With fifteen thousand men so engaged, it was inevitable that some should get warm and warmer.

Warmest of all were twenty-five stout riders of the Sixteenth New

York Cavalry under a lieutenant named Doherty, a lieutenant named Baker and a colonel named Conger. They reached Port Royal on Tuesday afternoon, April 25th, and did some lively research. They pelted to Bowling Green, thirteen miles away, past the Garrett farm that stood life size on their left. In that little town by darkness they found Captain Jett in his bed at the hotel. No matter how, they wrung from his lips the secret of Johnny's hiding place. They had not been out of their saddles for days and night, but avarice and the excitement of the chase cleared their heads, straightened their spines and rekindled their blood. Back they galloped, like huntsmen fresh out of bed in the morning, ten miles up the road to the Garrett farm.

It was two o'clock in the thin, cold moonlight and heavy as they were, men and horses, accoutered as they were, they yet managed to move up the long lane to the gentle hill in the locust grove like shadows and surround the house noiselessly. But for all their slyness, the smell of their greed woke the dogs, and they set up a clamor that would raise the dead.

Mr. Garrett threw open a window and stuck his head out. "Who's below?" he called to the unfamiliar bushes that flourished in the yard. One of them uprooted itself, slid to the kitchen door and began hammering upon it with force enough to rattle the windows. "Who's below?" he repeated. "Who is it?" his wife piped out behind him, not daring to look.

"Come down," Lieutenant Baker said. "We are Federal troops. We want to ask you some questions."

When the frightened rebel with his nightshirt stuffed in his pants and a lighted candle in his fidgety hand opened the door, they grabbed him and yanked him outside.

"Where are John Wilkes Booth and David E. Herold?" Colonel Conger demanded.

"I don't know any such men!"

From behind, a rope with a knot in it the size of a small club dropped down over his head and the noose was rapidly tightened. Mr. Garrett let out a yell that brought his sons Jack and William on the dead run from the stable. They were instantly collared.

Jack said, "There's a man who says his name is Boyd, asleep in

the tobacco barn. He's a stranger to us. We let him spend the night there."

"We wet him sweep there," William repeated. "He's a stwanger to us. His bwothew is with him."

"Keep hold of them, boys," Lieutenant Doherty ordered.

The dead silent cage is as dangerous for the men outside as inside. It would be easy for them outside to shoot through the black openings between the boards and kill the two foxes hiding there if Stanton did not want their skins undamaged, if he did not want them intensely alive for the great holiday of public hanging. It would be easy for them inside to aim through the cracks and kill the bold soldiers, maybe half a dozen, before they ran out of bullets or lifeblood. The bold soldiers furtively encircling the tobacco barn had porcupine scalps and chilly backs, thinking this.

Lieutenant Baker slipped up, put a padlock on the door and turned the key in it with a grating sound. He stood there listening for a moment. "All right," he called softly over his shoulder, and they brought averse William Garrett up to him. The darkness contracted like the pupil of an eye and every bird, bug, animal, grass and leaf wizened with it. Lieutenant Baker drew his heels together and lifted his head like a soldier going to be decorated on the parade ground. "You in there!" he called. "I have a proposal to make! I'm going to send one of these farmer boys in! Give him your arms and ammunition and let him bring them out to us, or we'll burn down the building!"

No answer.

Lieutenant Baker reached out, unlocked the padlock and opened the door wide enough to push the farmer boy through it. He slammed it shut, locked it again and stood back. They could hear a torrent of low-pitched speech and then William knocked on the door in agitation. The officer let him slide out and men reached out for him and pulled him off to one side. "They won't give up," he said, "they won't give up theiw guns, they said they've going to stay wight thewe. The wittle one said they ought to shoot me fow betwaying them but I said I didn't betway them, so then the cwippled one said to get out!"

"All right, you fellows in there!" Lieutenant Baker said loudly. "Come on out. You haven't got a chance in the world to get away. I've unlocked the door. Come out with your hands up over your heads!"

The voice of a trained actor rang out then, "Who are you, my friend? What do you want with us?"

"You know what we want with you," Lieutenant Baker said. "We want you to come out of there."

"But who are you?"

"That's our business. We know who you are, and that's the main thing. You can't get away. There're fifty of us armed with carbines and pistols. You couldn't go five steps in any direction."

The actor considered this for what seemed a long time. "Captain, this is a hard case, I swear," he said. "Perhaps I am being taken by my own friends."

"Perhaps you are!"

"Give me ten minutes to think it over, won't you? This is a hard case."

"Ten minutes, then."

"All right, time's up," the officer called. "Come on out with your hands up. We're going to set the barn on fire!"

"Are you?" the actor said perfectly. "I am a cripple, a one-legged man. Withdraw your forces a hundred yards from the door and I'll come out. Give me a chance, Captain! I'd do as much for you, if I were outside and you in here!"

"We didn't come here to bargain with you, Booth. We came to get you. You're under arrest. Or would you rather go up in smoke? This barn's going to be afire in ten seconds!"

Brush had been carried and piled against the south corner of the barn. It was all ready to light.

*"Well, my brave boys, you can prepare a stretcher for me!"*

Where did he learn this line? From Shakespeare? Why no! Old Osawatamie Brown said it when they had him 'cornered at Harpers Ferry. A soldier in the Richmond Grays repeated it at the hanging. It must have stuck in the actor's memory. It was a good line then, and it's a good line now, dramatic. He recites it as if in a play.

He recites again. "One of us wants to come out! He wants to give himself up!"

Who might this be who wants to come out?

A very young man who is half out of his mind with the fear of burning to death!

"Where are your arms?" the officer inquired of David behind the door.

"I ain't got none," he cried hysterically.

"You were carrying a carbine yesterday. Hand it out first."

"No, I wasn't, I swear to God. What would I be doing with a carbine?"

The actor spoke out clearly, "The boy is telling the truth. The guns are not his. They are mine!"

"He was the one seen carrying the carbine."

"It's mine, on the word and honor of a gentleman. He's empty handed and guiltless. The guns are mine. I bought and paid for them. Let him out."

"Yes, let me, let me, before you set the fire!"

"Put your hands out then."

The Lieutenant opened the door far enough for the very young man to thrust his arms out. Lieutenant Doherty slipped a pair of handcuffs on him and jerked him out. Rough hands dragged him into the shadow of the corn cribs.

He was only a boy, hadn't shaved yet, never kissed a girl, wasn't dry behind the ears, had tears in his eyes, was bawling. "You see," he whimpered, "I wouldn't of left him but it come back to me what they said, that he's going to die anyway. The gangrene's got in his bad leg, and they said—and there ain't no sense in getting burned up alive if he's going to die in two or three days anyway. Otherwise, you see, I wouldn't of left him, but I thought—I thought—"

"Quit blabbing and listen." His guards strained their ears.

"Don't let them burn him up. Please don't. He's awful sick and going to die anyway. Please—" There was so much saliva in his mouth he had to stop and spit. He wiped off his wet lips with the back of his hand, then wiped his wet eyes. "I feel awful sorry for Johnny, he's been so bad off. You don't know what a hard time—"

"Quit blabbing."



"Draw off your men," said the beautiful voice from the dark barn, hushing everything. "Let me fight them one by one. I could have shot half a dozen of you tonight, but you are brave men—why should I murder any of you in cold blood?"

Colonel Conger made a rope of straw. He set it on fire and thrust it through a crack in the corner. It landed on a little pile of straw inside the building and the straw caught fire. In the minute it was all ablaze and the walls caught like tinder, lighting the room as bright as day.

A sergeant named Boston Corbett, castrated and cowed child of cantankerous God and long despairing of man's redemption, did not too much mind risking his neck to step up within six feet of the burning barn and peek through a crack at fine-feathered John Wilkes Booth. He squinted and took a good look. Lit up by flames, fine-feathered Booth on his crutches had a six-barreled revolver in his hands and he might be fixing to take a shot at somebody. He certainly might. It looked like it to Sergeant Boston Corbett. A shot at maybe two or three guiltless Christians. The Sergeant shook his head and clucked softly. That ought to be put a stop to. In fact, God leaned down and said the very same thing. That ought to be put a stop to, my boy. So Sergeant Boston Corbett took steady aim with his pistol, pulled the trigger and put a stop to it.

He shot fine-feathered Booth in the back of the head and he went down in a heap.

They dragged him out of the barn and laid him on the grass under a locust tree. He looked as dead as a doornail but Lieutenant Baker put his ear against his chest and said he thought he could hear the heart beat, although in the wrist there was no perceptible pulse, so he was still alive. He started making funny little noises, too, and the half-opened eyelids over the dusty bead eyes twitched, so he wasn't dead. The war-whooping fire made everything light as day, not real day but the contrived overbright of stage noontime. The green grass was green as a billiard table under gaslights, and the trees looked like a stage forest prepared for a production of *Robin Hood*. Dragging Booth from the flames they pulled his shirttails

out of his pants, and until an officer thought to poke them in again and fold his coat together, his thin belly and jutting chest were bare, and rather than white in the flaring glare the flesh looked palest blue. So did his face and hands, and his hair and eyebrows spuriously jet.

Lieutenant Doherty and many willing hands tried to save the tobacco barn but they could not get water there fast enough and it was a hopeless cause. They had to give it up and let it burn, going back down through its stages of erection in reverse until it was only a foundation again, to the ground.

By that time daylight had come, and very pale, poor stuff it looked beside what had been. They had to move the shot man to a cooler place and carried him over to the front porch of the farmhouse. They met men coming out with a straw tick who dropped it right there, neither in nor out, so that Booth when put down upon it had his head and shoulders in the parlor and his feet and legs outside on the porch. It made it very unhandy to tend him, but then, there wasn't much to do for him.

Colonel Conger sent to Port Royal for a physician. All the officers bit their lips with vexation that their quarry was so nearly dead, and wondered what the reward would dwindle to for each of them. Lieutenant Doherty muttered that Sergeant Boston Corbett ought to have his block knocked off to blaze away with his gun and spoil everything like that. They all said the Sergeant was crazier than a loon with his religion anyway and should have been shut up long ago.

They sloshed off Booth's head and face with cold water, and when they tried to force a swallow of water down him he blew it out but did not have breath enough to blow it all out, so what was left trickled out the corner of his loose mouth. He opened his eyes then and they saw he knew them and knew himself and where he was.

When the doctor, highly excited, arrived as he did soon after, and examined the hole under the man's right ear where the ball had gone through and the larger hole on the left side of his fifth vertebra where it had come out, he said he would not last long. They asked if there was any chance in the world to get him to Washington

alive and he said no chance whatever. Off the porch and wandering around the yard, having done all he could do, and looking over the scene of the excitement, the doctor accepted a chew of tobacco from a tired cavalryman and went into some detail about the dying man's condition.

Booth was paralyzed from the neck down and did not know where or how he was lying or if he was sitting, the doctor said obligingly. Since he could not cough or swallow, his lungs were filling up with saliva and that was about the same thing as drowning. It must feel very like drowning, the doctor said. Not very pleasant, no, indeedy. He knew everything that was going on, probably. Felt like he was smothering and choking and drowning and was helpless, couldn't do a thing about it. A man in a fix like that would naturally say kill me, kill me, as somebody had just reported that he was saying every once in a while. No, it was certainly not very pleasant. Of course, his organism knew that this was the end, knew that it had sustained the deathblow, the hit it would never stand up against, it knew that, the body knew, the doctor said, and started dying, and probably that was all the head thought about—dying, finishing, getting done.

"So you don't think he's laying there thinking over all his past life?" a cavalryman with corrupt teeth wondered interestedly. "The way they say they do when they're dying and are conscious like that? I been over there a time or two and looked at him. My home folks'll be asking me twenty times. He's got his eyes open and he looks like he knows what's going on."

"Someone was saying he said 'Tell Mother I died for my country, I did what I thought was best,'" another man said. "So you see he can say something once in a while. God Almighty, laying there like that. Somebody was saying he keeps thinking his chest and throat is filled up with blood and keeps wanting the Lieutenant to press it out, but they can't do nothing. Laying there like that for better'n two hours. Imagine."

"God."

"Like drowning, when the organism is paralyzed like that," the doctor repeated, "only of course much worse, I would venture to say."

"He deserves it," a blue-eyed soldier decided, taking a chew of tobacco.

"But imagine if it was yourself!"

"I wouldn't be in a fix like that."

"How does a man get himself in a fix like that anyway?"

"It beats me."

"Assassinating the President."

"And here he was a big actor and had all kinds of money."

"Somebody was saying he done it for the notoriety."

"I bet he was well paid by old Jeff Davis."

"Do you suppose he's laying there thinking over all his past life?"

The doctor repeated that he did not believe so. Not only was the wound so grievous, but the man had sustained a stunning shock. The doctor maintained that he probably was not thinking of anything. He was merely dying.

Four or five of the soldiers strolled over and looked at the man's one boot sole and one shoe sole that stuck out onto the porch, but they did not go beyond the steps to get a look at his face, because his head was in the parlor and Lieutenant Baker and Colonel Conger were crouched on either side of him, and a woman inside was sitting on the floor with a basin and was wringing cloths out of it. The officers were emptying his pockets and that made the men think he might be dead, but somebody inquired respectfully and Conger shook his head. Booth didn't have much on him because they could tie it all up in a handkerchief, just a comb and a red leather book, a pipe and a few things like that. A spur, too. The Colonel took the little bundle and got to his feet and came down the steps and went for his horse. Somebody said he was going to Washington.

They watched Lieutenant Baker take one of the wet cloths from the woman and scrub Booth's hand with it and then hold it up to Booth's face. When he let go of it the hand fell down. Booth murmured something.

"What did he say?" they turned to each other and asked.

"What did he say, Lieutenant, please, sir?" they asked the officer out of curiosity.

Lieutenant Baker turned his head and looked at them, his eyes vacant. "What?" he said.

"Booth. What was it he just said, sir?"

"Why, he said, 'Useless. Useless.'" He turned back to the dying man and leaned over him.

The handful of soldiers looked at each other.

"What do you suppose he meant by that? Useless?"

"That maybe his hands was useless now that they're paralyzed," one said.

But another shook his head. "Maybe he meant his life," he said.

They just stood around then and thought it was about time for breakfast, and soon the officer got to his feet and said John Wilkes Booth, the assassinator of President Lincoln, was dead.

The young fellow who had tagged along with him was bawling over by the apple tree with his handcuffed hands up on the trunk and his face laid down on them, and he was certainly a pretty sight.



## || AFTER ||

When Ned Freeman, the Negro, rolled up to the gate in his wagon and saw the burnt barn, the yard full of soldiers and horses, and the Garretts standing around as white as ghosts, he thought he might as well meander right on out of there, but he had no more than picked up the reins when a high-and-mighty officer saw him and came over to the fence.

"What's your business here?" the officer said.

"Got no business, sa," Ned Freeman said cordially "Merely comes to get the two gentlemens wants to get to Guinea Station this mawn-ing."

"And what two gentlemen were they?"

"Don't rightly know, sa. Never seed them."

"You stay right where you are," the soldier said, beginning to smile slyly. "We've got a little job for you. One of the men has changed his mind. He wants to be taken somewhere else, not Guinea Station."

"That so, sa?"

"Yes, now he's decided he wants to go to Belle Plain."

"Do he?"

"Because he's boarding a boat there to go to Washington."

Ned Freeman was silent. The high-and-mighty officer had a look on his face like it was all a big joke.

When they brought a dead body out sewed in a bloody blanket and put it in the wagon, he knew that was what it was supposed to be, and he attempted a sickly smile, although it did not seem very funny.

A lieutenant climbed up on the rickety seat beside him and an orderly dropped the end gate down and clambered on in back, his feet dangling, beside the corpse. The officer said they would cross

the Rappahannock and then go out the Belle Plain road from Port Conway. The ferry was right there when they arrived at Port Royal and they got across the river with no delay, which pleased the nervous Lieutenant.

The sandy Belle Plain road ran through miserable, desolate country, and all the way the officer kept looking back and to both sides. It made Ned Freeman nervous to watch him out of the corner of his eye, and the first thing he knew he was acting the same way. Once he thought he saw the red and yellow skirts of a gypsy glide through the woods and he felt a crawling of the skin. It seemed as though she might be following and watching, but he did not catch sight of her again.

Five or six Dixie soldiers loomed in sight and straggled down the road toward them, coming home from the war, and the Lieutenant grabbed hold of his pistol, but when they got close he took his shaking hand off it and pretended he was not the least bit scared. They hollered out greetings and he and the orderly returned them with false heartiness. The raggedy soldiers looked in the wagon as they went by and saw the long shape in the stained blanket.

"What you got in the wagon?" one of them called back. "A dead Yankee?" His companions laughed.

"Yes," the Lieutenant said, looking round so they could see the smile on his face. When they disappeared, he took his handkerchief out and wiped the smile off at the same time that he mopped up his sweat, and he was trembling like a leaf.

He didn't mind so much as Ned Freeman, however, when a king-bolt broke on one of the little hills, the wagon reared up and the dead body was as good as standing. "Get under there and fix it," he ordered. Ned Freeman crept under and reached out, and at that minute blood from the corpse began to seep through a crack in the wagon bed and splashed like a raindrop or two on his hand and ran in a little trickle up his arm. When he saw what kind of rain it was he jerked back, bumping his head so hard it raised a lump there, and scrambled out from under the wagon. He wanted to turn his horse and wagon right over to the Union government as a gift with no strings attached and make tracks for home, but they said no, siree, to climb right back under there, blood or no blood, and

fix that wagon. The Lieutenant had his gun trained on him and the Negro had to oblige, praying under his breath and his eyes rolling.

Even after he scoured the blood off with sand, he kept feeling like it was still on him all the rest of the way to Belle Plain, and he looked on his hand and arm with loathing.

The Lieutenant was as glad to board the steamer, the *John S. Ide*, waiting there, with his orderly and the dead man, as Ned Freeman was glad to see the last of the three of them. The sun was low and he had a long old trip ahead of him in a bloody wagon he would look upon as haunted as long as there was a splinter left of it, but the Negro started off bravely. When darkness fell, however, he began to pray and, keeping his eyes shut tight the biggest part of the time, prayed all the way home.

Soldiers removed the body from the *John S. Ide* at ten-thirty that night when the steamer reached Alexandria, and put it on the monitor *Montauk* anchored off the Anacostia Navy Yard. Still sewed in its blanket, they bore it to the forward deck and laid it on a carpenter's bench. Armed guards stood around it all the balmy starlit night as though it might get up and walk away.

By eleven the next morning the corpse had begun to smell so in the beaming sun that the Commandant of the navy yard sent to the Secretary of the Navy and asked what to do with it. He replied by sending the Surgeon General and other officers to have a look at it. With them were a few witnesses who had known the man in life, the doctor who had operated on his neck, the desk clerk at the National Hotel and some others. The blanket off, it took them a little while to surely recognize the features of the dead man. They did finally, and signed affidavits to the effect that this was indeed John Wilkes Booth, but they were stumped for a minute that what had been such a sight for sore eyes could now be what it was.

When it was pitch dark that second night, Lieutenant Baker and some sailors carried a pine gun-box, with BOOTH painted in white letters on the side, to the old penitentiary. The cells on the ground floor were full of ammunition stored there by the Ordnance Department. They cleared out one of these, lifted up a large flat stone and dug a grave. They put the box in the grave and replaced

the stone, and when they went out the Lieutenant carefully locked the iron door behind him as upon a prisoner.

Asia? Whisperers said that, driven mad, she had been confined to an asylum for the insane, after Johnny's death, but no, it was a lie. She was not mad. In August of that sad, long year she gave birth to two babies. Soon after, with them and her three other children and the husband she could not love because he was not someone else, she went abroad to live. John Clarke, her husband, she said in the book she wrote in England about her younger brother, "was an entirely opposite creation" from Johnny. And so . . . and so . . . When they saw each other for the last time (all unknowing) and were about to part, Johnny put his arms out to her. "Oh, my boy," Asia said brokenly, going into them, "I shall never be happy till I see your face again." She did not swear it. She did not say, "I swear it by my love," but it was a vow for all that, ever kept.

Ella Starr? She waited, of course, but Johnny did not come when he promised because that Good Friday night was the night he shot Abraham Lincoln and jumped from the stage and galloped off down into Maryland. When she heard the news they thought certainly she would cry over him at last, the way she should have done all along, but did she? Not Ella. She just got some chloroform, went to her room, shut the door and tried to kill herself. She came so near dying that Nellie and Dudall and the beauties and even Juanita the impudent squirrel gave her up for lost, but then she came out of it and lived. That Saturday, Nellie's habitation was at sixes and sevens.

The Conspirators? David Herold had been caught, of course, down in Virginia; Lewis Payne (who tried to kill Secretary of State Seward and failed), Samuel Arnold, Michael O'Laughlin and George Atzerodt were arrested within a few days after the assassination and thrown into prison. (John Surratt had disappeared, would not be apprehended until two years later, in Alexandria, Egypt, when he would be brought back, tried as a traitor and assassin, and acquitted.) Willy-nilly with them at the bar of justice were Dr.

Mudd, who set Johnny's leg, bewildered Mrs. Surratt and the stage-hand Ned Spangler, whose crime was that he had known the Booth family for many years. These seven men and one woman, christened *The Conspirators* by the newspapers at the time of their arrest and erroneously grouped under that appellation to this day, were brought to trial before a military commission on May 11th, a little less than a month after Abraham Lincoln's death, and on June 30th they were found guilty as accused.

They were treated viciously the whole time. It was no wonder people thought they were a gang of dangerous criminals. They looked the part. Accustomed to the blackness of solitary, low-ceilinged dungeons, what could their red-rimmed eyes do but blink "evilly" when confronted by the light of day? No baths, no clean underclothes, no change of garments in all those weeks—how could they smell or look like a lady and seven gentlemen? Part of the time they wore iron collars around their necks, with short chains fastened to a heavy iron ball on the floor, so they could never look up, but had to sit, hour after dreary hour, with their heads bowed down. Their hands were manacled, their feet shackled, and when heavy padded canvas hoods were put down over their heads, with only a little hole to breath the oppressively hot air through, it was a wonder they did not go mad. Perhaps they did, a little. The Secretary of War had to write to the Commandant of the navy yard and tell him to "secure" Lewis Payne "to prevent self destruction." Lewis Payne was a mystery to his keepers—he did not move his bowels even once in over a month.

Mrs. Surratt, Lewis Payne, George Atzerodt and David Herold were sentenced to be hanged by the neck until dead, and on July 7th at two o'clock in the afternoon they were executed. It was a sizzling day and their clothes were damp with sweat when the soldiers cut them down and put them, still limp and hot, in their coffins.

Samuel Arnold, Michael O'Laughlin, Ned Spangler and Dr. Mudd were sentenced to life imprisonment in the military prison on the Dry Tortugas. Michael O'Laughlin went free in a few months by dying of fever, but the other three stayed more than four years.



Johnny's wardrobe never reached Richmond, Virginia. The vessel sailing out from Montreal was wrecked, and though the trunks and boxes were salvaged, the costumes were quite ruined. The Richmond maiden's auburn hair floated off and drowned and was never seen again. Sold at public auction months later by decree of the Canadian Vice-Admiralty Court this wardrobe, once worth thousands, brought only five hundred dollars. Edwin obtained one of the trunks from a man whose brother had bought it at the sale. One winter night, something like eight years later, he burned all the costumes in the furnace under his own theater, then about to be given up for another. Rather, he let his valet burn them, while he handed them over one by one, remembering his father, remembering wild Johnny, but he did not shed a tear until he picked up the Richard III velvet doublet. That, he cried against, as though it had been somebody alive now going away and never coming back again. He handed it over, though, in a little while (the valet pretended not to see his bitten lips and wet eyes), and it went up in flames. Then they broke up the trunk and burned it. . . . Edwin, who had never felt any rancor for Johnny and would have been amazed to know what jealousy and hatred could have smoldered against himself, had other things to remember his younger brother by. A picture of the "rising young tragedian" in his fine coat and gloves, for one. Something else, too, had Edwin—a bullet mounted in gold, engraved FROM MARK GRAY TO EDWIN BOOTH, dangling from his watch chain, a bullet that might not have been aimed at him if Johnny had not committed his crime, though fourteen years seems a long time to wait for revenge. He was on the stage of a Chicago theater, reciting the last great soliloquy in *Richard III*, when all of a sudden—bang! and a bullet whizzed past, missing him by inches. . . .

Two years after Johnny was buried under that stone slab in the locked cell the old penitentiary was torn down, so they moved him to a new grave. They took him to a large warehouse on the eastern side of the Arsenal grounds and buried him with some old acquaintances of his—Mrs. Surratt, Lewis Payne, George Atzerodt and David Herold. He and David lay side by side again, just as

they had those six long nights in Cox's grove, but this time they had no dreams and no old owl said in plain English, Who? Who? Who?

Andrew Johnson, ready to step out of office and turn the reins over to the new President of the United States, Ulysses S. Grant, gave the Booths permission to come and get John Wilkes Booth and bury him in the family plot in Baltimore. He would not give it, though, until they signed an agreement saying that they would never put a monument over him, or mark his burial spot by any means whatsoever.

Edwin hired a Baltimore undertaker named Weaver to go down and bring back his brother's body. Arrived in Washington, Weaver engaged two local undertakers to help him. Using a furniture wagon, for word had been passed that the corpse of the man who killed Lincoln was going to be transferred and they did not wish to be molested by curiosity seekers, they went out to the Arsenal grounds on a fine morning in early June. Weaver showed the Major in charge President Johnson's written release. The Major helpfully supplied some soldiers, they dug up the decaying gun-box with the almost obliterated white letters on the side spelling BOOTH, and put it in the van.

The two Washington undertakers decided it would be better not to take the body to their place of business for the little wait necessary before Weaver could put it on the train and ship it to Baltimore. If the news got out that it was there, curious crowds might swarm in and ruin all their nice decorations. One of them had the good idea to store it in the stable they were renting in the alley back of Ford's Theater, right close by, so they drove there in the furniture wagon and put the box in the stable, covered it over and locked the door. Johnny would have known where he was in a minute. It was the very stable he had kept the bright little bay in, and led her out of, that night of April 14th. . . .

Toward the last of June, four summers after Johnny died, all the Booths except Asia (who would die some twenty years later in England and be buried there) gathered at the Greenmount Ceme-

tery in Baltimore on a Saturday afternoon. An expensive casket was lifted out of Weaver's hearse. During the ceremonies, Mary Ann, the mother, was quiet enough, but when the preacher began the rite of solemn blessing over the coffin as it was slowly being lowered into the grave, she put her hand up to her mouth as if that moment her child was being killed before her eyes and she began to sob most terribly, her knees buckling.

That grave of his. . . .

Johnny used to say when a little cat-chill ran down his spine, "Somebody is walking over my grave," but he did not think there really was a spot on earth earmarked for splendid him. There was, though, and that was it. He lies there yet under grass, beneath a bird or two and sauntering ivy, but no way is it written: he lies here.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Alcott, Louisa May. *Hospital Sketches*. Boston. 1863
- Aldrich, Mrs. Thos. B. *Crowding Memories*. Boston. 1920
- Bates, Finis L. *The Escape and Suicide of John Wilkes Booth*.  
Memphis. 1907
- Beard, Charles A. & Mary R. *The Rise of American Civilization*.  
New York. 1927
- Buckingham, John E., Sr. *Reminiscences and Souvenirs of the As-  
sassination of Abraham Lincoln*. Washington. 1894
- Campbell, Helen Jones. *The Case for Mrs. Surratt*. New York. 1943
- Cheney, Ednah D. *Louisa May Alcott, Her Life, Letters, and Jour-  
nals*. 1887
- Clarke, Asia Booth. *The Unlocked Book, A Memoir of John Wilkes  
Booth*. New York. 1938
- Eisenschiml, Otto. *In The Shadow of Lincoln's Death*. New York.  
1940
- Eisenschiml, Otto. *Why was Lincoln Murdered?* Boston. 1937
- Forrester, Izola. *This One Mad Act*. Boston. 1937
- Harris, T. M. *Assassination of Lincoln, A History of the Great  
Conspiracy*. Boston. 1892
- Hornblow, Arthur. *A History of the Theatre in America*. Philadel-  
phia. 1919
- Howard, Hamilton Gay. *Civil-War Echoes: Character Sketches and  
State Secrets*. Washington. 1907
- Kimmel, Stanley. *The Mad Booths of Maryland*. New York. 1940
- Laughlin, Clara E. *The Death of Lincoln*. New York. 1909
- Leech, Margaret. *Reveille in Washington*. New York. 1941
- Lewis, Lloyd. *Myths After Lincoln*. New York. 1929
- Lewis, Montgomery S. *Legends That Libel Lincoln*. New York. 1946
- Lockridge, Richard. *Darling of Misfortune*. New York. 1932
- Miller, Frances T. ed. *The Photographic History of the Civil War*.  
New York. 1911
- Moore, Frank. *The Civil War in Song and Story*. New York. 1889

- Morris, Clara. *Life on the Stage*. New York. 1901
- Mudd, Nettie. *The Life of Dr. Samuel A. Mudd*. New York. 1906
- Official Records. Assassination of Abraham Lincoln. Trial of the  
Conspirators. Trial of John H. Surratt. Impeachment and Trial  
of Andrew Johnson, 17th Pres. of the U. S.
- Oldroyd, Osborn H. *The Assassination of Abraham Lincoln*. Wash-  
ington. 1901
- The Oregonian. February—August 1865
- Pitman, Benn., compiler. *The Assassination of President Lincoln  
and The Trial of the Conspirators*. Washington. 1865
- Sandburg, Carl. *The War Years*. New York. 1939
- Stern, Philip Van Doren. *The Man Who Killed Lincoln*. New York.  
1939
- Townsend, George Alfred. *Life, Crime and Capture of John Wilkes  
Booth*. New York. 1865
- Virginia: *A Guide to the Old Dominion*. New York. 1940
- Warren, Robert Penn. *John Brown*. New York. 1929
- Whipple, Wayne. *The Story Life of Lincoln*. Philadelphia. 1908
- Wilson, Francis. *John Wilkes Booth, Fact and Fiction of Lincoln's  
Assassination*. New York. 1929
- Winter, William. *Life and Art of Edwin Booth*. New York. 1894









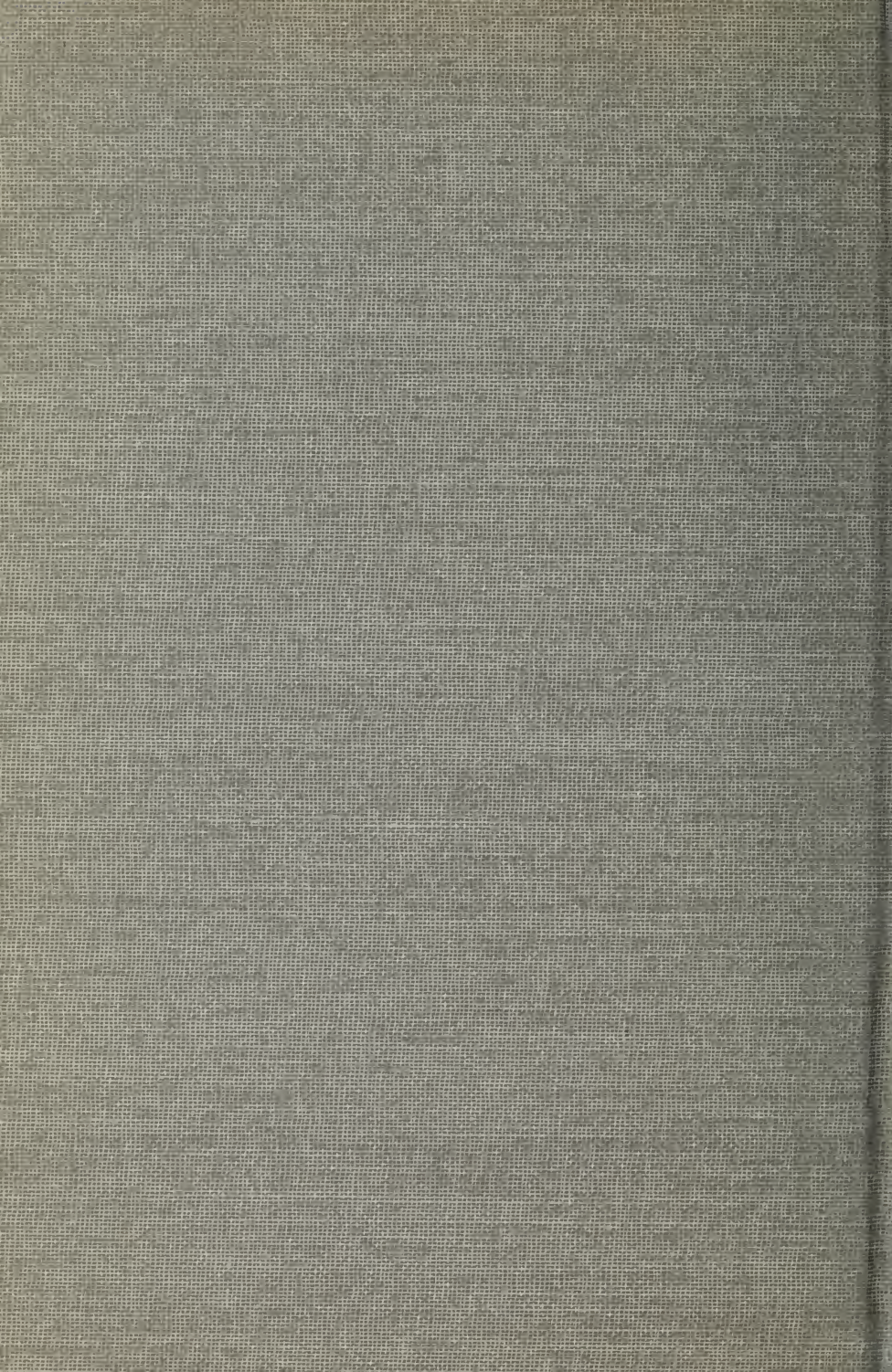
















BOYCHUK STUDIO, PORTLAND, ORE.

**ARDYTH KENNELLY** grew up in Salt Lake City, and a Mormon household there provided the background for her recent best-selling novel, *THE PEACEABLE KINGDOM*. She attended Oregon State College preparing to be an English teacher, but since 1940 when she married a Portland doctor, Egon V. Ullman, she has successfully combined the life of a homemaker with writing poetry, short stories and novels. She insists that she enjoys keeping house, from scrubbing the woodwork to cooking unusual dishes. Her husband shares her interest in writing—he writes poetry, medical papers and is now working on the story of Corti the Italian anatomist who first discovered the eardrum.

*THE SPUR* was inspired by her insatiable curiosity about “the man who killed Lincoln.” The controversial explanations about Booth in both contemporary and modern accounts only led to more reading, then research of her own, and finally with enough notes to “fill a bushel basket,” the story of John Wilkes Booth came to life on paper.

